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OUT IN THE BOONDOCKS

Out in the
BOONDOCKS

MARINES IN ACTION
IN THE PACIFIC

21

U. S. MARINES TELL THEIR
STORIES

BY

JAMES D. HORAN

AND

GEROLD FRANK

G · P · PUTNAM'S SONS · NEW YORK

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FOREWORD

When the full story of World War II is written, perhaps then we shall be able to assay the importance of the U. S. Marines and their Homeric exploits in the Solomon Islands. Let the military experts gauge the strategic significance of these battles, which began with landings on Guadalcanal, Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo on August 7, and marked the first exclusively American land offensive in the Pacific. It is sufficient to agree now that they stopped the Japanese in their tracks, smashed the myth of Japanese invincibility, and threw the Japanese warlords off a racing stride. Our concern is with the men who took part in these battles, with whom we spoke and to whom we listened hours on end, and whose stories you will find in these pages.

Each of them had death as neighbor. Each of them had undergone a mental and physical ordeal more punishing, in the opinion of medical authorities today, than any combat troops have known in history. They were men who had what it takes. Men? Some were only boys, like eighteen-year-old Billy Harding. Not even the most omniscient dramatist would cast Billy for the role he played. Certainly, by all the rules he seems more suited to be pictured sitting at a drug-store counter sipping a malted milk than strangling a Japanese soldier on the edge of a Guadalcanal fox hole. But they were all Marines, and what they did is the stuff of which the songs and sagas of a people are made. Billy Harding, and twenty-year-old Jimmy Hall, who played

possum among the dead: while a Japanese mop-up squad nudged him, and turned him over, and stripped him and, miraculously, did not bayonet him to make sure, and all the rest of the boys who went out in the boondocks, would dismiss such characterization as "hero business," and be pretty uncomfortable about it. But we who sit behind typewriters and dare only a smudged finger or a twitchy eye have the right to use words about them. We spoke to them in naval hospitals, in the quiet of hotel rooms, in their homes and we know what they are. Hero fits them.

Some of these Marines were part of the Marine Raider Battalion, commanded by Col. Merritt A. Edson. For months before August 7 they trained, both in the United States and on small islands in the South Pacific, for the job they had to do. Your Marine Raider is tough. He makes up the advance guard, the shock-troops, the battering rams, as it were, who hit an objective and soften it up for the troops that follow. He's a *Marine-plus*, handpicked for the most dangerous and difficult tasks. He has perfected himself in every possible technique of defense and offensive warfare. He knows amphibious fighting. He's at home in a rubber boat, in a fox hole or as part of a raiding party assigned to hit, destroy—and disappear. He's a specialist in hand-to-hand fighting, and he knows the skills of gouging, bayonetting, strangling and knifing. He's trained to sweep out of nowhere to strike at an objective, smash air and naval bases, communication centers, ammunition dumps, military stores, defensive installations. On August 7 it was the Raiders who invaded and captured the island of Tulagi, following that up by sweeping over Florida Island and relentlessly pursuing the Japs who had escaped from Tulagi. Meanwhile, the main body of the Marines had landed on Guadalcanal. On September 1 the Raiders joined forces with them on Guadalcanal and helped push the Japanese back into the jungles. On September 11, under Colonel Edson, the Raiders attacked the Japanese village of Tasimbogo. Painted like Sioux Indians, they crept through the jungles and attacked the village at dawn, burned it to the

ground and destroyed vital enemy ammunition dumps. The U. S. Marines were thrown into the battle of Lunga Ridge, variously known as Raiders Ridge, Bloody Knoll and Edson's Ridge. That was on the night of September 13, when the Japanese launched a terrific counter-offensive to regain control of Henderson airport. That attack failed. On September 15 replacement companies of marines landed on Guadalcanal to reinforce the marines who had been there since August 7. More battles ensued, among them the historic battles of the Matanikau river.

The boys in this book played their part in history. Here are their stories.

THE AUTHORS

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OUT IN THE BOONDOCKS

BOX SEAT FOR INVASION

The Story of

CORP. JASPER LUCAS, U.S.M.C.



JASPER LUCAS is thirty, and hails from Nichols (pop. 300), S. C., a sleepy farming village where they grow their Marines ruddy-faced, slow-spoken, and tough. Stocky, unexcitable, he's seen a lot of action since he signed up with the Marine Corps in Savannah, Ga., three years ago. He was attached to the 9,375-ton U.S.S. Quincy, and was aboard her when she engaged in a hell-and-thunder close-range battle with a Japanese naval and air force and was sunk "in enemy action" in the Solomons.

August 7, 1942. Four A.M. I'm on the heavy cruiser U.S.S. Quincy, bearing down on Guadalcanal. The U. S. Marines are to land at 9 A.M.—zero hour—and our job is to guard their transports and landing boats, cover them as they hit the beach, and take care of whatever Japs show up on sea or in the air. We are thirteen, members of the director crew, charged with plotting the enemy's range for our guns below. Captain Fraser is our control officer, a swell egg, red-headed, freckle-faced, and just as steady as can be. He's wearing headphones and is in direct contact with our five-inch antiaircraft gun batteries, and Smitty, the talker, has his earphones on, too, waiting to relay messages from the chief gunnery officer below.

Five A.M. We're steaming through the darkness. Somewhere up ahead there is Guadalcanal, eighty miles long, twenty-five miles wide, full of jungle and Japs. We're a mite excited.

Can't blame us. We don't know if we'll be met by Jap shore batteries, or what.

Six A.M. Smitty speaks up: "Stand by!" That's the order from the main control room. I glue my eyes to my binoculars and wait for Guadalcanal to loom out of the darkness. Then we see it. It looks like the silhouette of a mountain in the distance. We're coming in nearer now, in formation with other ships. Smitty speaks up again, and his voice is a little higher: "Open fire!"

Our five-inch guns open up, and then our main batteries, and as our big eight-inch guns let loose, the vibration shakes us in our perch until the teeth rattle in our heads. The U.S.S. *Quincy* has had the honor of firing the first shell to land on Guadalcanal. We keep our eyes open up there. Suddenly there's a rain of red darts pouring from the sky over the island—our navy fighters, Grumman Wildcats, are strafing the beach. Now a Jap tanker, hiding in the darkness about three miles away, fires at us. One of our destroyers takes care of her promptly—it only took a few minutes before that tanker was in flames. The destroyer went right at her.

The beach is now about 3,000 yards away. An enormous blaze flares up on it. One of our shells must have hit an oil or an ammunition dump. It burns for a long time, the flames jumping higher with successive explosions. The U.S.S. *Quincy* keeps busy. For the next couple of hours we make steady runs up and down along the island, throwing our shells over.

Nine A.M. Zero hour! The Marines go in. Every ship and every gun around us opens up simultaneously to cover their landing. You never heard such a racket as goes on for the next five minutes. A lot of lead is kicked out, and that's a fact. I can see the landing clearly. See the boys go over the sides, fill up the landing boats, each boat flying an American flag at the stern, and see the boats zigzagging in to the beach. I see the Marines hit the beach, fan out, and take their positions, setting up their guns and holding the beachheads for the rest of the

landing party. At five minutes after nine, we hold up our firing.

Nine-ten A.M. We let out a hell of a terrific cheer: they've run up the Stars and Stripes on the beach, almost directly in front of us! The Marines flash back positions of enemy objectives. We fire at intervals. Three Jap flags are flying from a small building about half a mile to the right of the landing party. Our guns knock two of them down. But we can't get that third one. "*God damn!*" says Captain Fraser, and he cusses a blue streak.

As the morning goes on, we get word that Jap planes are on their way. Should be in the neighborhood around 1 P.M. The Japs come over twenty minutes early. Our sound detectors pick up their drone when they're still miles away. Minutes later they come into sight. They're at 14,000 feet, flying in tight formation. Captain Fraser sights them first. "Well, girls, here they come," he says. "Train on 'em." We set up our fire control problem—getting the range on them—and Captain Fraser communicates it to the batteries below. Our guns open up with everything they have, but the Jap planes, these big, horizontal four-motored bombers they have, come in anyway. We knock down some of them. The rest keep coming. We see their bomb bays, like tiny black shutters, open up. Their eggs drop. They seem to be coming directly at us. The U.S.S. *Quincy* takes evasive action. It's a curious feeling to stand up there in that director, in that circular space a few feet across, and know you're chained to that spot no matter what happens. The bombs land. They miss. They land fore and aft. Geysers of water explode, fountains of water roar toward the sky and fall back again. Near misses, but misses just the same! Our Grumman Wildcats are up there now. The Jap planes beat it back to wherever they came from.

Two P.M. We relax. They send up sandwiches—corned beef, cold cuts, lot of variety—from the galley. We gobble them down with steaming hot coffee. The day grows hotter. There's

continued activity on the beach. The Marines are solidifying their beachheads. They're taking over all right.

Four-thirty P.M. The boys with the earphones stiffen. They've picked up the sound of planes again. This time it's a different drone, higher in pitch—Jap Zeros. Dive bombers. They come into sight. There's a few scattered clouds, and they duck in and out of them. Then they scream down at us, peeling off one by one into sharp dives. Our ack-ack fills the sky with puff-balls of white smoke. The Japs concentrate on one of our destroyers. She begins to maneuver, twisting, dodging, turning. The Jap planes dive through the hail of antiaircraft fire, struts screaming. Six times they try to hit the destroyer. Six times they miss. The sea boils about us. The Japs climb up into the sky and disappear.

We stick to our posts all night. We sit up there, high above the sea, swaying back and forth under the blue-black sky. We know the Japs will come back.

August 8. Nothing particular happens this morning.

Two P.M. The Japs return. Seventeen of them. Torpedo planes this time. They streak in from the direction of Tulagi. They carry plenty dangerous tin fish. To our left, our sister ship, the U.S.S. *Vincennes*, comes nearer. The whole fleet's on edge. The Jap planes roar over the water low as hell, and flash between the *Vincennes* and us. We wait until they're where we want them. Then we let go. We score hit after hit. They're clay pigeons. First the *Vincennes* opens up on them. We let loose a broadside. The vibration starts us jiggling about. Some of us got black eyes that day because if you don't have your binoculars glued to your eyes when a broadside's fired, you pound yourself black and blue.

When the smoke clears away, there's a torpedo plane roaring by with smoke and flame fizzing from her engine. She climbs into the sky, maneuvers, and dives straight at the deck of the *George F. Elliott*—one of the transports near us. It's a suicide dive. The plane hits the deck with an awful roar. There's a bubblelike burst of flame, and in a couple of seconds the

George F. Elliott is on fire from end to end. A destroyer stands by and takes off her men. We got seventeen torpedo planes that day. There was no way of telling what ship got what planes. We had a real field day, letting loose with everything—our twenty-mm., our 1 point 1's (pompoms), our five-inch guns. We'd wait for a plane to get into the clear, and bam! we'd let her have it. There was a lot of swell sharp-shooting any way you look at it.

When it was all over, Captain Fraser said, "A good afternoon's work. Let them come in again. We can take seventeen more like that."

That night my face was blistered red from looking up in the sky.

August 9. Two A.M. Quiet as a graveyard. Then, all at once, we were caught in a sweep of searchlights. The Jap fleet was coming in at us. Cruisers, battle cruisers, destroyers, submarines. As the first searchlights hit us, we scrouched around up there trying to duck the light. "Train on 'em," said Captain Fraser. "Train on 'em, train on 'em, train on 'em!!!" We had to illuminate the enemy with star shells and get their range so our main batteries could open up. Overhead, Jap planes began to strafe us from stem to stern. We were being hit by shellfire, and shrapnel was whizzing about like hail. You could see it raining off the turret—it looked like rain hitting a window and bouncing off.

We were working away a mile a minute when there was an awful jar. Somebody yelled below, "We're on fire! The *Quincy's* burning!" I looked down over the edge of the director. The gun deck was aflame. A torpedo had hit us, going through the main engine room. We lost control of the ship. We began losing steam. The next torpedo went through the IC room, the power plant of the ship. Our communication system went dead.

We knew we were sinking. We knew we were out of the fight. We had no power, no control over the ship; she was beginning to list, and we knew she was on her way out. Captain

Fraser turned to the man nearest him and shook hands with him. He said, "Good luck." We all did that. We passed it along. Each man turned to his neighbor, shook hands with him, and said, "Good luck!"

Then Captain Fraser said, "Abandon director."

It seemed he had just finished the words when I saw a big flash, a ball of flame, and the next thing I knew I was sailing through the air. I hit the deck and passed out. I came to a minute later. How did I get here? I asked myself. Sailors were rushing past me. Officers were shouting orders. The smell of burning wood and paint and powder was in my nose. I tried to move. My left side, from ankle to hip, was completely numb. It didn't seem to belong to me.

The U.S.S. *Quincy's* motion was the motion of a doomed ship. You can't stay here, boy, I told myself. I tried to get up, and my left leg crumpled under me like paper. I finally sat up, raised myself to my right knee, and was halfway to my feet when another explosion rocked the ship. Through the smoke a body hurtled toward me. It hit me squarely in the side and slammed me down to the deck. It was a sailor and he was alive. He got to his feet, looked down at me, blinked his eyes, and staggered off. I don't think he ever knew what hit him, or what he hit.

I waited until I'd caught my breath. Then I worked up on one leg. I was about to pull myself forward when there was another explosion. And again a body came flying through the air and bowled me down. It was another sailor. He didn't seem to be hurt much, either. He went off without even looking around at me.

I lay there. To hell with this, I thought. I felt silly. I'll stay right here until they stop sailing around.

The *Quincy* was listing badly. Some wounded were standing around. They looked as if they didn't know what it was all about. They were stunned. A young sailor came by. He leaned down, said, "Come on, let me help you out of here." He helped me to my feet. I had to yell, my left hip hurt so bad. He

helped me down to the gun deck. I must have passed out again, for pretty soon I found myself lying on the deck and no one around me.

I crawled to the rail of the ship, hurting all over like hell and trailing my bad leg after me. I pulled myself up the rail and found a place where I could get my leg over. Cargo nets were all over the rail. It seemed years before I could get myself over. I was doing very nicely when, for some reason, my bad leg became tangled in the nets. I couldn't pull my foot out. The pain was unbearable. Each time I tried to pull, the pain shot through me and I sweated with it. That was the queerest feeling I ever had. I didn't know, I just didn't know how I was going to get my leg out of there. I couldn't lift it up or down. I just hung there. Then a miracle happened. The U.S.S. *Quincy* listed to the port side so I was level with the water; my legs swung loose, and I simply floated right off. I swam away fast as I could. I didn't want to be dragged down in the undertow. Then I turned, floating on my back, and watched the U.S.S. *Quincy* go under....

She went down like the dignified old lady she was. Deliberately, easily, without fuss or bother, she turned her fantail right into the face of the entire imperial Japanese Navy and with all screws turning sank beneath the waves. The screws whirled like a fan in the air, then, as it went, churned the water white. The commotion in the water died down. The U.S.S. *Quincy* had gone under.

I was a mass of pain. I swam around looking for something to grab onto. In the darkness I could hear voices. I could make out Smitty's voice calling out, "Captain Fraser, Captain Fraser, Luke, Joe, Scotty"—and then over again. I heard other voices, "Hey, over here, Bill," and "Give me a hand, will you." Each time I heard a voice I tried to paddle in that direction. I could hear the distant sound of naval gunfire, and the drone of planes. Were they Jap planes; were they coming back to finish us off by strafing us?

My right hand struck something hard and smooth. It was a

large, empty can bobbing up and down, about three feet long and six inches in diameter. I had a hell of a time holding on to it. It was oily and slippery and was always sliding out from under me. I had to fight to hold it every time a wave struck. Each jar made my hip hurt so bad I didn't know what to do. For six hours I hung on to that can. After a while some of us bunched together and kept near each other. We tried to stay in the immediate vicinity of where the *Quincy* sank. At dawn we might swim to Guadalcanal or be picked up by ships coming from the beach. Once we saw a burning ship. We knew it was the U.S.S. *Astoria*. She was laying dead between Tulagi and Guadalcanal. We tried to keep in touch with each other by shouting. One of the fears we had was of being washed out to sea. Another was that we might be picked up by Japanese ships.

One of the things I'll never forget was the spirit of Lieutenant Seal that night. He was a young, cheerful Navy man with a wonderful sense of humor. While we were floating around in the water, he would yell, "Oh, if I only had my blonde here. Boy, if I only had her here now!" Then someone else would get the idea and yell back, "Aw, you wouldn't know what to do with her."

Toward dawn we saw the shapes of ships passing, but we all kept quiet, thinking they might be Jap ships. One ship came near. It was a U. S. destroyer. We yelled when we recognized it. We paddled near it, a sea ladder was dropped down, and I pulled myself up it.

First thing they did was to bandage me. I had flash burns on my hands and face. Then they gave me a cigarette. That was the finest tasting cigarette I ever smoked in my life. They put me on a stretcher, they gave me a shot of morphine, and I fell asleep.

THE HUMAN TARGET

The Story of

CORP. ANTHONY CASAMENTO, U.S.M.C.



TONY CASAMENTO is twenty-two, and a product of one of the toughest districts in New York—Manhattan's upper East Side. The boys who grow up there are tough. Tony's tough, too—but he has the unassuming honesty and simplicity of a genuine hero. He looks frail, but he's hard and wiry, and when he speaks—he has a little difficulty talking, as you will understand when you read his story—it is quite apparent that he doesn't know how swell a person he is. Son of a tailor, he joined the Marines on August 19, 1940, because he wanted an education. On Guadalcanal he stood single-handed against the Japs, in as memorable a chapter of bravery and defiance as you'll find anywhere. *We salute him!*

Sometimes when I can't sleep at night and I lay around thinking, I try to figure out why I'm alive now, and I can't, except that maybe God set aside a day for me to die, and that day wasn't it. I just don't know. Anyway, I'm alive, I can walk and breathe, and the doctors say it's a miracle. I'm glad to be alive, I'm glad for anything at all now, but I feel awful when I think of my buddies who were killed. I saw them get it. I could put out my hand and maybe take a step or two and touch each one of them. Those ——— Japs, they're crazy. They don't think anything of human life. Plain crazy, sick in the head, that's all.

Anyway, I'm in the Marines, see, I got in early. I was in Cuba, and other places, and then we landed on Guadalcanal

that August 7. I guess you know all about that. I was the first man out of my boat. They made me acting platoon sergeant in charge of four machine-gun crews because I was pretty experienced and in the Marines longer than the rest. We moved toward Henderson airfield after we got ourselves in shape, and I sent out a couple of scouts to see if the way was clear.

They come back.

"It's jungle all the way through," they say. O.K., that means we got to hack our way through. That's all right with us. We do that. We march about an hour and come to an oil dump where the Japs must have made their first camp. Everything was tossed about. We saw big oil drums, and about thirty or forty tents, and then Jap shacks with grass roofs. You could see they were settling down for business when we butted in—fortifying the place with ditches dug, and fresh-chopped trees where they were fixing up machine-gun emplacements, and so on.

"Lucky we came on 'em now," says Bill, a little guy who's my buddy. We begin nosing about the grass. It's almost up to your waist, it's so high. All of a sudden Bill lets out a yell. "Here's one!" he shouts. I don't know what he's talking about, and then he pulls out a hand grenade and hollers, "Get up there!"

Right out of the grass jumps a Jap. He sticks his hands up over his head and begins to jabber and yell.

"Shut up!" Bill says. "Take off your clothes!"

Damn if the Jap don't understand him. He takes off his pants and he's wearing a little white diaper sort of thing. Our officers told us once the Japs will even carry guns in that. So we search him, but he doesn't have any gun.

Corporal Mahalle is detailed to take him back to the rear. We keep moving forward. We go into the jungle and push on. Then we come to the Ilu River—it's just a creek—and about 100 yards away, on the other side, we see some Japs huddled together. They're wearing brown dungarees and brown army

caps but they don't do anything. I'm taking no chances, so I order one of our machine guns set up and we fire on them. They start running. We kill a couple of them and the rest escape, but they're picked up by our own men down the river later.

I send the scouts on further to check up. That gives me time to grab ten minutes' rest. Then I start investigating myself. I see a couple of tents ahead of me. Sergeant Weiss—there's the bravest man I ever met—Sergeant Weiss and me, we walk up carefully on the tents, and then go in. We find post cards, games, playing cards, and pictures of Marines—American Marines—that we know were taken out of the wallets of Marines on Wake Island.

That makes us feel terrible. All of this stuff belonged to the Marines of Wake Island. And these Japs must be the same Japs who landed on Wake Island and were so tough. We decide we'll do right by our boys who got it on Wake Island. We keep looking through the things there. We find Australian money, which we figure the Japs stole, too, some Jap money, and a hell of a lot of flashlights and pens and pencils.

We push on to Henderson Field. We're still about 200 yards away when I hear the sharp whine and ping! of the Japs' .25—snipers. We take cover quick, set up our gun, and go to work ourselves. We get snipers with our rifle fire, too, picking them off as they run through the bush. Every time you hit a Jap he jumps like a rabbit.

That's the way most of that day was. Firing, advancing, killing a few snipers, dodging Jap bullets. We had word from the front that the Japs might try to take back the island, so we kept plenty busy, digging in and fortifying the island with emplacements and trenches, putting up barricades, barbed wire, and getting set for any trouble. While we're working, the guys are happy. They sing a lot. "*Take me back to New York Town, New York Town is my Home Town, that's where I long to be...*" A lot of kidding and joking, too.

Well, the next few days pass like that. Nothing exciting.

Then, about August 10 or 11, we get ourselves a visitor. We see some natives coming toward us in a canoe. They had a fellow with them. You could see he wasn't a Jap. He was a wounded navigator. We all ran to the beach and helped him out. The first thing he did was look at us, say, "Thank God, Americans!" and pass out. He was about twenty-two. I guess he thought we were Japs at first. Later he told us the natives found him, took him to their village about forty miles from the 'canal, and bandaged up the wounds in his leg. He gave 'em gifts and so on and they became friendly. The bandages they put on were sloppy, but our corps man took care of him all right.

August 12, we have more visitors. This time they're Japs. We see them, about half a mile down the beach, waving at us with something white in their hands. They wanted to give up.

One of our officers watches them for a minute, then turns away. "Aw—them, to hell with 'em, make 'em come to us. We're not going to them." You see, we figure it might be a trap or something, because the Japs were pretty sneaky. They come wandering in, though, one or two at a time. They're Jap laborers, little guys, and one Jap soldier, who was a hell of a lot bigger. Some were wearing the Jap soldier khaki cap, which is like a baseball cap. That looked fishy to me and I still can't figure it out. Those Japs are fanatical people, anyway; there's something wrong with all of them. Anyway, they came in, our officers took a look at them and then ordered them back.

O.K. For the next few days, it was the same sort of thing. Except, of course, there was the battle of the Tenaru. It's all a little mixed up in my mind now, dates and things like that, except that I can remember everything that happened to me the day I got it. It was raining hard and we saw the whole Jap fleet unload out there, and they hit us by the river with a dozen tanks but we stopped them there. The Japs lost nearly a thousand men that night, fighting until dawn, then they gave up and withdrew.

Then came that day in November when we had a mass engagement on the island. That day the Japs had a big gun up

on a hill. We called it "Whistling Pete," and it was giving us hell. I was in charge of the two machine-gun squads and the two guns that day. We had a job to do.

I tell Corporal Williams, one of my squad leaders:

"You take your men and gun to the other side and climb up that hill from behind."

I said to the other squad leader:

"You stick with me; we'll go forward."

It was about 11:30 in the morning when we started. We go ahead, keeping low. We reach the Tenaru; we cross it, and the Jap snipers are going ping! ping! all the time at us. Boy, they were hot that day. The more we kept going forward, the more it seemed the snipers were coming out to meet us. Somehow, just after we cross over the bridge, something comes into my mind. It's the funniest feeling. My time's up, I think. Right now, today.

It's so strong I tell Williams.

"Nuts," he says. "You wait and see. You're too damn lucky."

But I had that hunch. You know how it is when you get something like that. It's whacky, but you can't help believing it. I try to shake it away and we keep going forward. So we get about 100 yards past the Tenaru River and the real fighting begins.

If those snipers were hot before, they were sizzling now. It was awful. We're setting up this machine gun and the place is alive with Japs. They're popping out everywhere. They had their guns all over the place, their mortars up in front, and the shells were whizzing around us like bees.

I get a sting in my right leg—it's a piece of shrapnel—it burns like anything—but I'm so excited, I hardly notice it.

Boy, the Japs gave it to us! They weren't fooling. They got every one of my fourteen men, killed or wounded them—everyone except me!

How do you figure that out?

I tried to help them. They were my men. I picked up my squad leader. He was sure hit bad all right. He'd been

shot right through the stomach. I picked him up: he tried to say something to me, then he died right in my arms. His mouth suddenly began to gush blood, his eyes started to stare, without winking, and I knew he was dead.

I felt his pulse but I couldn't feel anything.

Some of the fellows near me were asking for help. I could almost reach out and touch them. They were whispering, "Help me, Tony, oh God, help me," but I had to work that gun. I just had to. There wasn't anybody else. I was the only guy who could stand up, and I didn't have a soul to help me. So I threw the ammunition into it and fired but I had a tough time. The gun was hot and getting stuck all the time.

Hell, I was mad then. I didn't give a goddamn. I lost my head, I guess; all my friends were shot and I was going to take revenge. The shells were booming and kerplunking all around, the shrapnel was whistling, the Japs were yelling, and it was a plain madhouse.

Then I spotted them—two Jap machine guns, about fifty yards away from me, one right straight in front of me, the other off sort of catty-corner from me. They were the sons of bitches who got my men.

So I got hold of my gun and fired at the first gun in front of me. I just let the whole belt go. God, it felt wonderful: just seeing that belt feed that way, knowing—well, I see the Japs suddenly pop up—I could see them hit—their stomachs sort of splitting open as though they were being cut in half, the blood spurting out, and then they'd tumble over on their faces, dead.

O.K. I try traversing the gun to the right, to get that second Jap gun, and just as I'm about to let the round go, I get hit.

It was like a bunch of hammers hitting me all over the body at the same time. It happened so quickly I didn't get hep to it right away. Then I find myself looking at my legs. My socks were soaking. The blood was trying to ooze out of my shoes. My ear was wet. I touched it, looked at my fingers: blood. Blood was coming from my neck and going down inside my

shirt. I was bleeding from my shoulder, my arms, my side, my hips, my legs.

That machine gun must have got me right square in its sights, and they just started from my feet up my right side to my head. They stitched a design of bullet holes in me. They got me from my right instep all the way up my whole side to my right ear. I even got one through my neck.

I'm getting dizzy. All at once I'm not standing up any more, but sitting down, sort of mixed up. Then I get dizzier, but I'm so mad I can hardly see straight. All those guys against me! O.K. I break out my canteen, open it, and splash the water into my face so I won't pass out.

I know if I pass out those goddamn Japs will rush up, grab my gun, turn it around, and start mowing down our own men about 100 yards behind me.

I suck some of the water off my lips and drink what's left in the canteen. I rip off my shirt and wrap it around my neck to help stop the blood. God, it was hot and sticky that day. It's hard to breathe, and so I take off my helmet and loosen my belt so I can breathe easier. The blood is coming out of me all over. O.K., I figure, I'm going to pay back those Japs.

I stand up to get to the gun again, and they start throwing grenades at me, the dirty bastards.

I need ammunition, but nobody can give it to me. All my Marines are lying around me, but they can't help. I reach out my right hand to get a round of ammunition about five feet from me when one of those grenades lands near me and breaks all the fingers on my right hand. Gets me right across the knuckles in a straight line. I look at my hand. It's dripping blood. I can't move the fingers.

God, I want ammunition. If I can just feed it into the gun, I can wipe out that Jap nest. I'm thinking fast and I suddenly realize the Japs are yelling at me in English. I can hear it plain. They're shouting:

"Retreat, Marine—Tojo says you must die!"

I was mad all the way through. I stood up there and began

dancing around like a crazy man, yelling back, "You come and get me, you little yellow bastards. You come and get me!"

But I wasn't making a sound, just the air whistling through the hole in my neck. I guess one of the bullets grazed my vocal cord.

Next thing I know I'm on the ground again. There's a rifle near me. I try to lift it with my left hand, but I don't have the strength. My squad leader is there right next to me. I spot his revolver. I try to get it out, but I can't because it had a short lanyard on it and I can't loosen that.

I'm working away at it, sweating and mad as hell, when suddenly something hits me in the chest like a punch from Joe Louis. It's like the kick of a mule. It knocks me back, hard, and I hit the ground with the back of my head. That shakes me up a bit. Then I figure it out. Another grenade landed near me and the concussion got me in the chest.

So I'm lying there and I can't budge. Everytime I try, I hurt all over. It's getting so I can't see things very well. I'm waiting to die, but I don't want to die. I keep thinking of my mother and father and how close it is to Christmas, and all the other guys coming back for Christmas and I won't be there, and somebody'll have to go up to my folks and say, "Mr. and Mrs. Casamento, Tony was killed—" I want to bawl then, but it won't do any good.

Any minute I figure the Japs will be there and stick me, but what worries me is that gun. Any minute they'll be there and turn my own gun on the fellows behind me, and they'll raise hell with us and our boys won't know what it's all about—one of their own guns shooting at them.

Then, out of nowhere, I make out a Marine. I can just make him out, but he's coming at me with bayonet fixed and I figure, Christ, what's he coming at me for? when all of a sudden Lieutenant Roberts is holding me up and he's saying, "My God, Casamento, what happened to you?" I didn't know until later that that Marine thought I was a Jap. My helmet was off, my face was all mud and blood, and I didn't have my shirt on,

it was around my neck. He would have killed me if Lieutenant Roberts hadn't recognized me and stopped him.

I guess I got excited then. I tried to yell, "Get them!" I was trying to yell, to warn them about the Jap gun still over there, and I wanted him to get some men to man my gun and wipe out those guys and I wanted to tell him about all my wounded buddies around me. But I couldn't make a sound, and he bent way over and began saying over and over again, "Don't you worry, fella, don't you worry."

Then he bandaged me up himself, ordered two men to fall out and told them to carry me back to the sick bay in the field.

They picked me up, and when they did that I passed out cold.

That's all I remember, then.

But the doctors at the base hospital said I was the worst case they ever saw. I was unconscious a couple of days. They had to feed me through my arms because I couldn't eat on account of my neck. I'd lost most of my blood, too, I guess, and they never thought I would live. I had more than a dozen bullets in my right side, and I don't know how much shrapnel—that's still in my fingers, my shoulders, and my chest. Blood plasma was what saved me and so did those wonderful doctors. We had the best that ever walked.

It's a funny thing when I think about it all. Where I grew up, a guy had to be on his toes. You had to know what time it was. You know, work all the angles, and get the other guy first or he'd get you.

Well, I don't want to be sharp any more. I just want to be an ordinary guy. I'm thankful, I'm plain happy I'm alive.

AN EYE FOR TWO HUNDRED JAPS

The Story of

SGT. ALBERT A. SCHMID, U.S.M.C.



OF COURSE you've heard of Sgt. Albert Schmid. He comes from Philadelphia, where he left his welding torch to enlist in the Marines on December 8, 1941, and he's twenty-three. One of the outstanding heroes of the war, he won the Navy Cross for "extraordinary heroism" on Guadalcanal. Blinded in one eye, he is now fighting to regain the sight of the other. Husky, phlegmatic, typical Marine in his reticence, he is a legend among other Marines because of the story he tells here.

More like a stampeding herd of hysterical cattle than humans, the Japs charged at us in massed waves across the shallow Tenaru River on Guadalcanal. I squeezed the release of my machine gun and felt it leap and quiver as it poured lead into the first wave. Again and again the tracers mowed them down.

A second wave came over. Again I let them have it. Still they kept charging at us.

"Jesus Christ!" flashed through my mind. "Where the hell are they all coming from!"

Suddenly a brilliant spotlight from the moon broke through the clouds and lighted up a large patch of the river. Through this spotlight, the Japs kept coming, coming, coming, to die in packs of thirty, fifty, a hundred. The *dumb bastards* . . . if they took the shadows they'd wipe us out before we could get to our feet. . . . Some screamed when they were hit, and clawed at their faces or stomachs, others dropped like stones and sank into the river. In a few minutes the whole bend of the river

was choked with their dead bodies. The screams of the dying, mixed with the rat-tat-tat of machine guns and bursting of mortar shells, made that night sound like a Fourth of July in Hell.

My buddies tell me I killed 200 Nips on that morning of August 21. I didn't see them. A hand grenade tossed by a Jap took care of that when it exploded a few feet in front of my face.

That was the last I saw of anything. Today I live in a world of shadows.

It seems ironical, in a way. I shouldn't have been behind the gun that moment. Here's why. After we'd landed on the morning of August 7, Johnny Rivers, my best friend, who was killed in the attack, and Lee Diamond from Brooklyn, our squad leader, were ordered to mount a machine-gun position on the banks of the Tenaru.

The weather had been hellish for days. The steady rain turned the whole island into a quagmire. It was a sea of mud, and in that mud we hiked day and night until we came to the grassy hill which began it all.

We looked up the side of the hill. The rains had plastered the grass down, and it had mixed with a slick mud until the side of the hill was like a sheet of glass. You couldn't find a foothold on it. Plowing steadily through the mud and carrying my machine-gun barrel had been pretty hard on me—I found three layers of skin had been rubbed off my left heel. Dirt and sand started an infection, and I was in real pain. I didn't want to say anything to Diamond because I knew he'd order me back to a field hospital.

So we began to scale the hill. It was hell. For every step forward, we slid back two. We worked so hard we didn't even talk. We saved our breath. When we got to the top of the hill, we saw the glint of the Tenaru.

Diamond looked down, then looked at Johnny and me. "I don't know about you guys," he said, grinning, "but I'm going down here the easy way." He sat down, held his ammunition

high in his hands, lifted his feet, and coasted down the muddy slope as though it were a playground slide.

"O.K., Johnny," I cracked, "I guess I'm next."

I slid down. So did Johnny. At the bottom, the three of us looked at one another and laughed.

"Hell," said Diamond, "you guys look like mud packs." We were all covered from head to foot with an inch-thick layer of Guadalcanal mud. But ahead of us lay the Tenaru.

We reached the river that same day. All during the hike to it my heel burned like fire. When we reached the river, my left leg was nearly paralyzed. The glands in my groin were painful and swollen. Every step sent a knifelike pain shooting up my thigh.

We got our first touch of Jap fire that night. We'd mounted our guns and were digging the fox hole, when the Nips threw tracers at us. "Duck!" yelled Diamond, and he and Johnny curled up in the hole. I flopped on top of them, but we hadn't dug the hole deep enough yet and half my body stuck above the ground. I held my head down, grabbed my forehead with my hands... *Jesus*, I thought, *I'm a clay pigeon. Those bastards can't miss...*

This kept up for what seemed a lifetime, and every minute I thought would be my last. But the firing ended as suddenly as it began. It was nearly dawn by this time.

We got up to finish digging. I saw someone coming. It was my captain inspecting the line. He noticed me limping.

"What's the trouble?" he asked. I told him. He raised hell, and ordered me back to the doctors at once.

I reported to Diamond and went back to the doctors. One of them, a short stubby fellow, said, "Get him back to the hospital for an immediate operation. He's got a bad infection there."

As he said that, we heard a roar of planes and started to dive for cover. Someone shouted: "They're ours!" He was right. God, we went mad with joy! We all thought the war was over on Guadalcanal. We sure were mistaken.

In the excitement I escaped from the doctor by double-talking him and saying I'd be back in the morning. I didn't want to leave the fellows. I went back to the dugout and found Diamond and Johnny taking it easy there. They'd finished digging the fox hole.

"What did the doc say?" Johnny asked.

"Aw, I talked him into letting me come back tomorrow."

Diamond was lying on his back, staring up into the sky.

"You be sure to get back there tomorrow morning," he said.

Early next morning, things began to happen. We were half-dozing, Johnny and I talking about Philly, when suddenly all hell broke loose.

A mob of tracers screamed right over our heads. I was so amazed—it came so unexpectedly—that I just looked up and watched them for a minute. If I'd stuck up my hand, I could have grabbed them, that's how close they were. But the swish of the bullets you couldn't see got too near, and I started to crawl into the hole. The roar of the machine guns and bursting mortars was terrific.

Diamond crawled in front of me, turned around, kicked me in the arm, and yelled, "Get back, get back! You can't fight with that leg. Damn it, get back!"

I nodded and made motions as if to return to the rear. Instead, I followed Diamond under that tracer umbrella into the dugout. He started to yell at me, but Johnny cut him short and pointed to the opposite river bank.

"Here they come!" he screamed, and grabbed his gun.

I'll never forget that sight as long as I live.

Lee yelled:

"There's a thousand coming over. Look at 'em."

That's the way it looked. It was a machine gunner's dream. They were packed solid. You couldn't miss.

Johnny swung the gun around to sweep the first wave. He fired a few bursts and slumped over the gun. He was dead with four bullets spaced neatly across his forehead. Johnny never knew what hit him.

Johnny was my closest friend. I grabbed him by the shoulders and pulled him away so I could get at the gun.

The noise was so awful you couldn't hear anything else, but Diamond was shouting to me. I'll never forget the look on his face. He was cursing as he was loading, and was shouting directions at me, but I didn't have to be told. I looked down the sights of the gun, and pressed that trigger.

The first wave went down like wheat.

"Come on, you yellow monkeys, come and get it!" I kept shouting over and over again, and they kept on coming.

Then that spot of moonlight came out and they were a perfect target, but they still kept coming over. I can't figure out to this day why they didn't come through the shadows instead of the moonlight. I guess Jap soldiers are like puppets: they do what their commanders tell them and they have no mind of their own.

Anyway, the Japs are no supermen when they get hit. They scream and cry like anybody else. Some of them kept charging right up to the banks of our side of the river. Sometimes it seemed as if dead men were leading that charge. They kept bucking that hail of bullets until they were torn apart. I could hear one Jap officer yelling orders as if pushing his men forward. He never led a charge but stayed on the bank and let his soldiers die.

Once I saw him with a sword in his hands. He was yelling and brandishing the sword above his head. I tried again and again to get him in my line of fire, but he seemed to have a charmed life. The bullets jumped and bounced all around him.

The Jap charges grew stronger. They used the bodies of their dead comrades as a bridge, but they failed to break through our fire.

Suddenly a Jap machine gunner began to work on us. The tracers came right into the dugout between Lee's head and my body. I don't know to this day why we weren't killed on the spot. I spun the gun over and gave it to him. I could see the Jap gunner jump up, paw the air, and drop. But one of the

last bursts hit the water jacket of our gun. Lee pointed and yelled:

"We're through, Smitty."

I thought so, too. But that machine gun refused to stop. The barrel refused to stop. The heat blistered my hand, and Lee Diamond never missed a trick in loading that gun, never stopped the firing a minute.

All of a sudden one Jap gained our bank. We could barely make him out in the shadows. I yelled at Lee and pointed. He grabbed a Reising gun, leaned out of the dugout, and sprayed the bank. He got the Jap, but that's when he got it, too.

A machine-gun bullet spun him back into the dugout, tearing through his wrist and smashing its way out through his elbow. He was finished. I had to work the gun alone, feeding and firing. The waves were breaking, but they were still coming over.

Then, finally, I got it.

There was a flash of light as if someone had fired a Roman candle in my face and at the same time slammed me over the head with a baseball bat.

A Jap hand grenade had exploded in front of my face.

Our gun was blown to pieces, and I found myself sprawled across Diamond's body.

I was conscious, but everything was black and way off I heard Lee asking in a high voice:

"Smitty, Smitty, are you O.K.?"

I remember mumbling something:

"How is Johnny... Where is Johnny... what happened to him?"

I put my hand up to push away the mud that stopped me from seeing. It was not mud. My hand felt a blubbery mass of blood and torn flesh. I went icy-cold.

My eyes!

I knew Diamond was shouting at me, but I just lay there. Words wouldn't come. I managed to say:

"Lee, hey Lee, did they shoot away my face?"

I felt him shake my shoulder. I heard him say:

"They only nicked you in the head, Smitty."

I knew Lee was wrong. I was trying to raise myself on my hands when my face was hit by a thousand particles of sand. It was horrible. It covered my face and made it one mass of agony.

The Japs were getting closer with their machine-gun fire and kicking sand all around us.

Somehow I lived until dawn. I couldn't see it, but Lee told me in whispers. It had been five hours since we had been hit. Pain started to work. Lee, too, was bleeding hard, but he didn't let out a whimper.

I took out my .45, which I always carried, and slipped off the safety catch. I heard Lee move, and he let out a yell:

"Smitty, don't shoot yourself, please don't."

I wasn't even dreaming of that. I said to Lee:

"When the Japs come in, they'll stick us like pigs. My .45 is loaded. Tell me where to fire and we'll get a couple of mon-keys before they finish us."

Diamond let out a sigh of relief, and we both waited for the end.

During a lull in the fighting—the Japs' attack had failed; only three got across, two died on the bank and one was picked off as he charged—Whitey Jacobs, a brave little machine-gunner, ran a gantlet of sniper fire to help us.

He dodged from tree to tree and finally dived into the dugout, landing flat on his belly staring into the muzzle of my .45.

"What the hell are you guys trying to do? Knock me off, too?"

He gave us water out of a machine-gun can and crawled back to get stretcher bearers.

I remember being dragged out and put on a stretcher and handing my .45 to a lieutenant. He told me later I said:

"I won't be needing this, sir."

The next thing I knew a wounded Marine lying next to me was asking my name and telling me we had worked together in Philly. In fact we had both quit at the same time and enlisted together at the same recruiting office. He said:

“Hell of a place to meet, Smitty?”

He was right there.

They took fifteen pieces of shrapnel out of my eyes and removed a cluster of shell splinters from my back. Recently they started to operate on my left thumb and little fingers, extracting a number of steel shrapnel splinters.

That's all there is to tell.

BATTLE FOR A FOX HOLE

The Story of

PVT. RICHARD WILLIAM HARDING, U.S.M.C.



WHAT INDOMITABLE courage is to be found in the heart of a typical American boy! That's the thought that passes through your mind when you hear the story of eighteen-year-old Bill Harding, of Admestown, Pennsylvania. He's a shy, dark-eyed youth with a wispy mustache who says of himself, "Aw, we're the sort of folks who have a house back home with a couple of chickens in the back yard." He was just out of high school when he enlisted in the Marines two days after Christmas, 1941.

Well, sir, I strangled a Jap in the crook of my right arm, I stuck another through the belly, I lay cracked up like a busted scarecrow for I don't know how long with a dead man's leg over me, but do you know what got me more than anything?

It was that walking and fighting the jungle of Guadalcanal. That stays with me. Maybe it's because during that other business—that bloody business—I was mixed up with everything happening to me. Maybe it wasn't too real to me. But fighting that jungle was something. I was lugging a machine gun, two small mortars, shells in my pockets, two bandoliers for my Springfield '03, and my pack, and for three days after we landed that August we walked. We walked across the beach into the jungle, and then we walked through that jungle. The bamboo trees were everywhere, so thick they seemed to grow as you hacked them down. It grew so dark in there you couldn't see the sky. It was like walking through a grassy tunnel. Early

the third day we climbed a hill—and that took the last starch out of us. But it was almost worth it. We saw something. The first fellows reached the top and I heard one of them yell, “There’s the ocean!” I felt as though someone had given me a shot of that super-duper vitamin. All of us rushed up the hill and sure enough, way out across the jungle, was the ocean. It looked wonderful. It looked so nice and cool. I said to myself, I’d give a whole month’s pay to jump in that water, clothes and all. I said that to the fellow next to me. He ran his hand across his face, snapped the sweat off his fingers, and said, “Hell, yes!”

The corporal yelled, “Fall in!” and we started to hike again. We’d made a wide circle, we’d met no opposition, and from all that I could figure, we were heading back to the beach again. On the way we came to a small stream. The Marines were like madmen in the desert, they wanted that water so badly. We dunked our helmets in it and poured the water over our heads. It ran down our blouses and down our legs. It felt swell. Then some of us carried helmets full of water back to some of the boys who had fallen out. They’d made small camps all along the way we’d been marching. We doused them, too.

We reached the beach at 4 P.M. the afternoon of the third day. Not far in front of us was a pile of wooden boxes. Food! Gosh, did we hit those boxes! We didn’t wait for any invitation. We sat down there, pulled out our knives, slit open the tops, and pulled out can after can of peaches. We jabbed them through with our knives and sucked out the juice. It was warm and sticky, but it tasted wonderful. Then we ate the peaches.

Well, sir, then we went to sleep. I felt as though someone had slugged me and knocked me out, I was so tired. We woke the next morning and started to dig fox holes. That’s an important thing on Guadalcanal, you know. Fox holes. They’re darn important out there.

In the afternoon a Marine stooped near me as I was digging and said, “Hey, hear the news?”

“What news?” I asked.

He waved out toward the jungle. "We took the airport," he said.

"Well," I said, "that's swell," and I kept on digging.

Next day we got a new order. We were going to the Tenaru River. And we started walking again. That damn walking sure got me down. We got to the Tenaru in the afternoon and did a little wood-chopping job. We cut away the brush along the banks so we'd have a clear line of fire. We calculated the Japs might try to come across. They did, too, later, but Smitty * took care of a lot of them. Anyway, that day was peaceful—until the darkness came.

It was about 8:30 P.M. The corporal told me, "You take the 9 to 12 o'clock watch." I said, "Okay," and slid out to take it. It was darn quiet all around the camp. When you're out on watch, a lot of funny things go through your mind. You get sort of imaginative. I thought about home and what the folks were doing and what the fellows were doing that used to hang around with me. I remembered the good times we'd had, and how we used to go out on double dates. . . . All of a sudden, I heard a rumbling noise. It sounded like a subway train. Then I heard footsteps. I turned, quick. It was another Marine. He'd heard the sound, too. "Hey," he said, "I think we better tell the squad." I said, "You're right." I woke up the fellows, and we all stood there, listening with all our might. Offshore, there was a sudden flash. We all saw it. Then it was dark again.

"What the hell is that?" one fellow whispered.

"Must be a sub signaling," someone said.

Just then our sergeant walked up. He whispered, "Don't fire, anybody. It'll give us away."

Well, sir, for half an hour we sat there, watching the light go on and off. You'd have thought somebody was out there having a good time playing with a flashlight. Finally the light went out. It didn't blink on any more. We went back to bed. My watch was over, and I hit the sack, too.

* Sgt. Albert Schmid, famed Marine, whose story begins on page 20.

Next morning we found out all about it. A Jap destroyer was anchored between Florida Island and Guadalcanal. The light came from her. About eight o'clock we discovered she meant business. She began to throw a lot of shells at us. They didn't come near, but we could hear them whining over our heads and landing somewhere back in the jungle. They didn't do any harm except to scare us badly and give us a chance to see a good fight when one of our planes came over from Henderson Field and got to work on the destroyer. We saw him hit her first in the stern with a bomb.

There was a big puff of black smoke, and one fellow yelled, "She's burning!" We saw the flames and smoke clearly. After she was hit that destroyer started tearing around in circles like a mad dog. That plane kept on her tail like glue. The pilot dropped his bombs, and then we saw him streak for Henderson Field to pick up more. In the meantime the Japs put out the fire and steamed out to sea. The plane came back, circled around for a few minutes, and I could just imagine the pilot, sore as hell. I guess he must have caught sight of the ship because he made a sharp turn and set out toward the sea. We never saw him return. I've always wondered, since, what happened out there. Who got whom?

A funny thing happened that same night. It was about 10 P.M. and I was in my fox hole, dozing off, when I heard the watch yell, "Give the password!" I grabbed my rifle and waited. No password. No nothing. I knew all the fellows in the squad were doing the same thing I was—sitting up there, in the dark, rifle in hand, waiting. What in hell *was* going on now?

The guy on watch didn't wait too long. He began banging away. We all followed suit. I banged away four or five times. Then—nothing but silence. We waited all night. When dawn came, we found out what it was. Cattle! Yes, sir, cattle. Eight cows were lying there, shot plumb full of holes. I guess they were looking for someone to pasture them. I knew how they felt. It's pretty lonely out there in the jungle at night.

August 21—that was blanket day. I'm out on a patrol up the beach, and we come to a big pile of Jap blankets. We didn't know what they were at first. They looked like big pieces of seaweed, washed into the beach by the tide. One of the older fellows picked up the first blanket. He no sooner picked it up than he held his nose and turned around. "Phew," he exclaimed, "they stink of Japs." Well, they certainly did. We each grabbed one and started back to camp. The rest of the day we spent washing the damn things, washing the smell of the Japs out of them. The blanket I had was the biggest goddamn blanket in the world. After I stretched it out on the beach to dry, I used it to cover me at night. It was so damn big you could cover six Marines at once, and keep them all warm, including their feet. I'd start at one end, and by the time I'd finish rolling myself in it I'd be wrapped so tightly I felt like the patient in a first-aid class.

The night of August 21 I knew what it was to kill a man the hard way—with your bare hands. That night we'd been ordered to the mouth of the Tenaru. We bivouacked about 600 yards from the actual mouth of the river. There's a little sand bar between that and the beach. The river flows under the sand, seeps its way through, and on to the sea. We were on the right side. As soon as we got there we went through the usual routine, digging fox holes and fixing ourselves up for whatever might happen. It was ten o'clock that night when a runner came panting into our midst. He told our captain, "Japs just landed up the beach. They're coming this way!" I grabbed my '03 and settled down. In about half an hour we could hear the Japs coming down the beach. The damn fools didn't even have scouts out. We could hear them jabbering to each other. They must have thought they were going to a picnic. Our lieutenant whispered, "Center fire. . . . Center fire." That means you must wait until at least half the body of the men pass you before you fire. If you hit the head of a body of men, the rest can take cover at once still some distance from you. If you hit them in the center, you cause confusion, split

them in half, and usually kill a great number more. Those in the lead are out in the open, too, and you can pick them off much easier.

Now they were coming closer. They were so near that the wind brought us their odor. Now we could make them out—small black shadows. They certainly were careless. One or two of them even giggled. The joke ended when our lieutenant yelled, "Fire!" I had my hand on a grenade. I pulled the cotter pin and let it ride. Everybody else did the same. Swish! It was like one big wind. There was a big orange-reddish flash, screams, and yells, and the sand came flying back at us as from a sand-blasting machine. It cut like the devil. We spit it out of our mouths and began banging away with our rifles.

The Japs were all balled up. They milled about in a panic. Then their rear came up, charging at us, firing from the hip with their rifles. They came in waves, making an awful racket, screaming and yelling at the top of their lungs. There must have been more than a thousand of them. We knocked 'em off one after another. Then they tossed over grenades. We knew they tossed one each time they saw a muzzle blast. We changed tactics right away. We'd fire, roll to one side quick, so we'd be somewhere else when they tossed 'em at us. When they fired, we weren't there.

Well, that went on for an hour. Then the lieutenant sent along the order: "Move forward. Let their grenades hit behind us." We moved forward. The Jap grenades began bursting in back of us. I crawled into a fox hole. Mister, I loved that hole. It was wonderful to me. Hell, ask any Marine who was on the 'canal what a fox hole meant in battle.

I was banging away. I heard someone in a hole a few feet to my left yelling something. I recognized that voice—it was Shea, one of my best friends. He was in a jam. So I crawled out of my hole and made off toward him. I was plenty scared, and I admit it. I came to the edge of the hole.

"Who's that?" Shea called out.

"It's Bill," I said.

"There's a dirty Jap bastard in here," Shea said. He was puffing hard, and out of breath.

"All okay now, Shea?" I said.

"Sure," he said. "Yeah, okay, okay. I got him."

I crawled away. I didn't know the complete story until some time later, when I met Shea and he said a Jap had sneaked into his fox hole and jumped him with a knife. He swung the Nip around and stuck a bayonet through him. That was just a minute before he'd yelled out, "Who's that?"

I got near to my fox hole. Jeez, I was scared. Tracers were coming over like white bees and I thought any minute I'd get it. Then the bums started to throw flares behind us. The whole place was lit up like a church. Every time one blew up, I stuck my face right into the sand. Then I started crawling slowly toward my hole again. I wanted to get in there the worst way. I was nearly there when a flare exploded behind me. I almost jumped out of my pants. In front, a little off to my left, a guy was making for my hole. I saw him clearly in that sudden white light. When it died out, I crawled forward again. I could see the dim form of this fellow crawling as I was. But I didn't know if he was Marine or Jap. I got closer. Another flare went up. When that died out, I knew he was a Jap—and I'd have to fight him for that hole. The bastard was trying to use my fox hole. I laid down my '03 and pushed it forward with my right hand, ready for action. I stalked him. He'd move forward. Then I would. Once I heard him yell in Japanese. I think he was yelling orders to someone behind me. I didn't wait to listen. I crawled again. Suddenly my right hand jerked. It stung like hell. I must have been nicked. I put my hand to my mouth. It was wet and salty. I kept crawling.

Now another flare banged off. The Jap halted. When the flare died away, I crawled around one side of the hole. I knew he went around the other. I waited, holding my rifle tight as hell. First I saw his hand, then his arm, then his head. He was coming closer inch by inch. I was afraid to fire because the

muzzle blast would give me away. Now I saw him clearly. His head was down, almost touching his wrist, like a dog hit by a car, and he was crawling. He was about a foot from me when I swung my rifle at him. I felt my bayonet slash his arms and he let out a yell. I didn't give him a chance to pull anything. I jumped him and landed on his back. I got his neck in the crook of my right arm and squeezed. His head was buried in my chest. He began to gurgle. I tightened on him with all my might. He began to kick and twist with his whole body: his head bored into my chest as he fought to get loose. He kicked so hard one foot kicked me in the back. It was a terrific blow, and I almost let go. I began to get a little panicky. I was afraid I'd suddenly go weak and he'd twist out. I kept thinking, I'll get it now, I'll get it now, I'll get it now. It ran through my head like a merry-go-round. The damn tracers were buzzing by, and every once in a while a mortar would blow up right close. I don't know why I wasn't killed because I must have been a clear target. But the Jap was getting weaker. Finally he stopped twisting. I held on for a minute. You can't trust a Jap. Then I let go. He was limp. I lay there, breathing hard. He didn't move. I pushed him with my leg. He was dead. There's one Jap that won't do any more damage, I thought. My right arm was numb from choking him. I turned to get into the fox hole when I saw a dark shape. I lay still. Oh God, this isn't another one, I thought. I waited. The shape crawled past me. I heard a voice—*muttering in Japanese*. I must have reacted automatically. I lifted my rifle in my left hand, the bayonet pointing at his stomach. I grabbed the barrel at the hand guard and shoved the bayonet at him. I felt it slide home. The Jap grunted and screamed. He shook and trembled and leaped around there at the end of that bayonet like a fish on a hook. I tried to pull out the bayonet, but it was stuck. Maybe I didn't have enough strength in my left hand.

I got up on one knee, to get better leverage—and that's all I remember. A flash, a noise like a rushing wind, and well, sir, I woke up on my back in a fox hole.

I thought I'd just been put through a hamburger machine. My left hip was smashed. My left leg was twisted in a crazy direction. My pants were ripped at the knee. I knew I had a bullet in there. The other leg was bent under me. I could feel it under my backside. My right hand had been nicked before by a bullet. My left hand was twisted. It was broken.

I lay there, thinking, am I dying? Is this the way it is? It seemed to be getting a little lighter now. I could make out a Marine lying on my right. His face was turned away from me. He looked as though he was sleeping. I tried to say, "Hey," but it sounded like a frog croaking. I turned my head slowly. There was another Marine on my left. Then I realized his leg was thrown across my stomach. I hadn't noticed it at first in the darkness. His head was near me. I tried to say something to him. But I couldn't get my voice out. Once I thought he groaned, but I wasn't sure. I could still hear firing. I was thirsty. I said to myself over and over again, "Jeez, I wish I had water. Jeez, I wish I had water, just a little water, I wish I had water."

Suddenly I had a terrible thought. I looked down at my legs. They felt so numb I thought maybe—well, you get all kinds of ideas shooting through your mind when you lay out there like that.

I was beginning to come out of the fog. Then a terrific explosion—I think it was a mortar shell—seemed to go off right under my nose, right in my hole. Hell, I thought, and I was sore, it's the same fox hole I fought that Jap for! Then I passed out.

I woke up with the sun in my face. It felt very warm. I was glad it wasn't raining. I felt sand in my mouth and when I moved, I felt sand loosening on my face. That last explosion must have hit pretty near and tossed a hell of a lot of sand on me. I moved my head to see if the two Marines were still near me. They were there. They hadn't moved an inch. The firing was still going on. I must be out between the two lines, I decided, the Japs in front, the Marines in back. *Suppose the Japs*

come over and find me alive? This nearly drove me out of my mind. I tossed my head from side to side and began to moan. I guess I was nearly bawling.

Once I seem to remember trying to talk to the Marine on my right.

"Hey, you got a .45?" I asked him. I think I said this a few times. He never answered. I turned to the other fellow.

"Hey, you got a .45?" I asked him. He didn't answer, either. If I had a .45 now, if I only had a .45 now, I thought, I could take care of any Jap bastard who came up.

I lay there all morning. The sun went higher and higher, and I guess it was around noon that I heard a fellow crawling up above. I was saying something, I don't remember what it was, when this fellow jumped into the hole. He was a Marine. God, I was glad to see him.

"You hurt bad?" he said. I must have looked half dead. I didn't know what to tell him. "O.K.," he said, "I'll go get a corps man." He jumped out. I must have gone under again, then, because when I came to a corps man was fussing about me. He was sprinkling sulfa powder in my wounds. Then he jabbed a needle into my arm. All I could think of was a cigarette.

"Got a smoke?" I said. He grinned and said, "Sure." He pulled out four cigarettes, laid three of them down beside me, and stuck the fourth one into my mouth and lit it. I took a drag so big I nearly choked. The smoke came out of my nose and mouth. In a few minutes I felt I was floating on air. I guess it was the needle. Everything looked strange. It felt so good I said out loud, "Aw, the hell with everything!" I finished the first cigarette, then the second, and then the other two. I was on the fourth when another Marine popped in.

He asked, "How do you feel?"

I nodded. "Swell," I said. "Give me another cigarette."

I don't know why I was so hungry for cigarettes, but I could have bummed cigarettes from the whole Marine Corps right then. I think I must have been out of my head from shock.

This Marine stuck a fifth cigarette in my mouth and jumped out. In a few minutes a sergeant crawled in. I was really holding open house that day. He grinned at me and lifted the leg of the other fellow off my stomach. He looked at him.

"He's dead," he said. Then he examined the other fellow on the other side of me. He shook his head.

At that moment I heard a couple of Marines yell, "There goes one, get him!" There were rifle shots and yells.

The sergeant crawled out, waved his hand, and vanished. A minute or so went by, and a corps man jumped in. He started to lift me up. The pain ran through me so bad I cried out. The corps man let me down, gently, against the side of the fox hole. He gave me another shot of morphine. I passed out.

Then I came to with someone bending over me. He was a doctor. He was doing things to me. I remember his smile as he said, "All right, son, just relax, now. You'll be out of here in a jiffy." Then he got up and walked away. That seemed strange to me, walking away when I was in a fox hole. Then I realized I wasn't in the hole any longer. I was lying on flat ground next to an ambulance. The doors were open. I knew they were ready to lift me up and shove me inside.

I saw the doctor walking about ten feet from me.

All at once there was a wow of an explosion. I saw the doctor grab his side. He went down on one knee, and then slowly, like a slow-motion film, he fell over. A Marine ran over to him and picked him up. I passed out cold again. When I came to, I learned the doctor was instantly killed.

A corps man told me.

"You know the doc got it from that mortar," he said.

I felt so badly I couldn't even answer him.

I was in the hospital for a few days and then transferred out to a base hospital. I slept for ten days and nights. I don't remember being awake once during that time.

I guess I really never got over that three-day hike. That was a hell of a lot of walking I did. I'll never forget it.

THE EMPTY GUN

The Story of

CORP. HENRY R. GRIMES, U.S.M.C.



IT WAS just "one goddamn thing after another" for Corporal Henry R. Grimes, twenty-eight, of Philadelphia, from the first moment he set foot on Guadalcanal. Corporal Grimes, a slow-spoken, retiring fellow, refuses to be impressed by the fact that he killed ten Japs in one of the most bizarre adventures undergone by the Marines on Guadalcanal. He received a letter of commendation for his courage in the actions he describes here.

I thought I was crazy. There was a tree stump in front of me. It moved. It started to grow. "You're going out of your head," I told myself. "It's this goddamn jungle. It's—"

But the tree stump *had* moved. And before my eyes it rose up out of the grass, two human arms emerged—and in a wink the tree stump was off and to one side, and there stood a Jap, in the flesh.

We stared at each other and stood frozen in our tracks.

I snapped out of it first, raised my rifle, and fired. He fell to the grass. The bullet struck him squarely between the eyes. I began to breathe again—and out of the corner of my eye I saw something else move. Then, suddenly, as though a cold wind blew on me and chilled me through, I realized there was this motion all around me. Tree stumps were moving. Tree stumps were rising out of the grass. I couldn't believe it, then I knew. Japs were all around me. Camouflage, but marvelously done. The Japs were on their knees, with tree-colored camou-

flage nets over their heads, and I caught in the middle. I was turning and firing in all directions at once, but after the first surprise was over, my mind began to work again and then it was simply a matter of hitting them where they were. And luck was with me that fantastic day, or I wouldn't be here to tell you about it.

From the first day we hit Guadalcanal that August 7, it seemed I was always running into the unexpected. For instance, it wasn't Japs we met after we landed on the beach and raced into the jungle. The first living souls we stumbled upon were a group of a dozen or so Marines eating coconuts. Here was the beach, and then the mad rush, and then the jungle, and then a little clearing—and a bunch of Marines there, having themselves a picnic.

That was my introduction to the 'canal. You can't blame me for feeling a little like Alice in Wonderland. After that first introduction, though, the rest of the first day was familiar and ordinary enough. Our destination was Point Cruz, and we had to make our way, once we got started, through grass waist high. That stuff was hell. It was giant grass as tough as bamboo, with an edge sharp enough to shave yourself. Well, we pushed through that, getting pretty cut up. You grab the grass to push it aside, forgetting that it's like a bunch of knives—and first thing you know your palm is criss-crossed with sharp stinging cuts.

But we finally left the grass behind and came to the Lunga River. It's a shallow, muddy stream, in the heart of a 30 mile long coconut grove, and as treacherous as the Japs.

I remember the Captain came up and warned us, "Don't get in there until we see how deep it is."

One man chopped off a bamboo pole, and stuck it down through the water to find bottom. It sank out of sight.

"Oh, oh," somebody said. "That's a bitch, isn't it?"

Then a runner came dashing up.

"There's a good bridge just 300 yards up the way," he announced. We made for that, crossed it without trouble, and

found ourselves in the middle of a large green grove, in the center of which stood a steam roller. A Jap steam roller! No question of it, we'd certainly caught the Japs with their pants down. We all got around the thing and studied it because we figured here's something direct from Tokyo. Two of the kids jumped up and sat in the driver's seat, and one cracked, "Oh, boy, I wish I had a Jap to roll over."

We were wisecracking like this when from far off came the drone of planes. "Zeros!" someone yelled. The Captain didn't wait for anything else.

"Take cover!" he snapped.

We got out of that open field fast. It was all over in a couple of minutes, though, for the Japs apparently were bound for the transports still on the beach and weren't bothering with us. We left the steam roller there and marched on. By noon, we were feeling about as lousy as we'd ever felt before. The heat was terrific. We were green hands, after all, and didn't have the veteran's sense to conserve our water as we should have. Pretty soon we'd emptied all our canteens and we were dying for water. Why, if you'd had a water concession there that day, you could have made a million dollars!

We were struggling along there, our tongues just about hanging out, when our prayers were answered. We came to another river. Some of the boys stumbled down the bank, as though it were a mirage, scooped up the water, and gulped it down.

The Captain came running down, excited as all hell, and yelling, "Don't drink that! Goddamn it, don't drink that water until you purify it!"

He kept running up and down the bank, shouting like that, and handing out little chemical tablets which purify practically any kind of water. But he had his troubles. Those boys were too thirsty to care about what they might pick up. Every time he left one group to caution the next, the boys would start drinking. Yet as far as I know, none of us came down with anything.

It got dark, finally, and we bivouacked for that night under the trees. I rolled up in my blanket and tried to go to sleep. Tired as I was, it wasn't so easy. My hands itched and smarted, stinging with the sharp cuts of the grass, and my legs ached from the march over that tough terrain, wading through mud and water, getting caught in the tangled roots of trees. We were sure fouled up. I remember, as I lay there, hearing a racket off to one side. The Captain was swearing like a mule driver. I gathered someone had made off with part of his luggage during the landing—the bag that had his underwear. He wasn't getting anywhere, for all his swearing, and after a while I didn't hear him any more. Then I remember looking up, trying to find stars in the sky that first night on Guadalcanal. But the skies were black, and there was a complete silence. Well, anyway, we'd landed. We hadn't seen any Japs yet. Everything was under control. The Marines were there. Finally, I slept.

I was pulled out of that sleep by the awfulest sound I'd ever heard—a spine-chilling scream, like a woman being attacked by a lion. I sat up, shaking. Everyone else was up. We stood by, gripping our rifles, hardly breathing. No one spoke. Then I heard whispering—some of our officers consulting. Then silence. Gradually, because there was nothing else to do, we sank back. But there was no more sleep for any of us that night. I don't think I ever waited more anxiously for dawn to come. When it did, we sat up, broke out our rations, and began to eat. We began talking about that scream, but nobody could make head or tail out of it. We were in the middle of our chow when a Marine patrol came by.

I strolled over to greet the boys. The corporal in charge seemed to have a great joke up his sleeve. He was trying to keep his face straight.

"What's so funny?" I asked.

"You guys hear anything last night?"

"You bet we did," I said. "What in hell was it? Do you know?"

"Yeah," he said. "We've been chasing it. It's the Japs—there's been a party of about ten of them wandering around out there trying to scare the pants off us."

That was a favorite war-of-nerves stunt of the Japs, we learned. They'd set up out there, back where you couldn't see them, and wail and scream in the godawfullest way you ever heard. Even if you knew it was the Japs, you couldn't help clenching your jaw and getting a little nervous when it came over.

Now a lieutenant came up.

"Prepare for action!" he snapped. That's all. Out of a clear sky, like that. We didn't know what it was, but some of the boys who were putting on their packs dropped them like hot cakes, and we began to advance. We marched, rifles ready for action, for about an hour and then we came to the edge of a clearing. We saw a group of three houses made of brick, wood planks, and tin. The ground had been leveled—and it wasn't a very good job, either—with steam rollers. The word passed swiftly along: "Henderson Field."

Our Captain took no chances. He ordered a squad to check the three shanties, which was really all they were. While the boys crouched low and made their way slowly toward the buildings, the rest of us lay on our bellies in the grass, our rifles ready, fingers on triggers. Nothing happened. The boys reached the shanties, circled them cautiously, and then went in. In a few minutes they came out and signaled that the place was deserted. We stayed at that airport all day, fixing it up and preparing to bivouac for the night.

That night it rained. Brother, that was a horrible night. The rain came down in buckets. None of us had any ponchos. We'd left a lot of our stuff when we began that advance on the airfield. In a few minutes we were soaked to the skin; the rain rolled off our heads, down our backs, inside our shirts, into our shoes. We were certainly a miserable bunch of gyrenes that night.

Now and then it thundered—long, rolling peals which

echoed through the silence. I remember thinking, funny, thunder, but no lightning. Then, all at once, I got it. That wasn't thunder. It was *guns*. Even as I realized this, a guy came over, crouching, and whispered, "There's a hell of a fight out there. The Japs are coming in to retake the island."

That was the night of the famous naval battle when the United States Navy hung up its great Solomon Islands victory. We had a strange box seat for this important event. We could see nothing, but we heard everything. If those Japs got through, it would be up to us to stop them! All night and through the dawn, those distant tom-toms sounded as the big guns went off. We lay there, each with his own thoughts, thinking as I was thinking, If they get through, it's going to be a hell of a fight. Brother, that'll be the pay-off!

But they didn't get through, thanks to the Navy.

Dawn came, and a hot sun which dried the clothes on our back inside an hour. I heard we were due to move back to the beach again as soon as somebody higher up gave the word. We were waiting there, this second morning, when we hear, of all things, cows mooing out in the grove.

One guy jumped up. "Meat!" he yelled. "Fresh meat. Let's go get it!"

Another fellow said to me, "Hey, Corporal, ask the Captain if he'll let us go out there."

I obtained permission and out we went, cattle-rustling in the grove! We could hear them lowing and mooing, and after about ten minutes we came to a small clearing and there they were, cropping the grass peacefully. They saw us, though, and when we tried to creep up on them, they lit out for parts unknown. We chased those damn cattle for about two miles through the grove, and couldn't get next to them. One of the boys in my party was from Kentucky. He was a real sharp-shooter, but even he couldn't get a bead on those cows. He'd get all excited every time he saw porterhouse on the hoof—but no go.

"Please stay still for one minute," he'd plead. "Please stay still for one minute, suh—"

We were walking along, kidding him about it, when a Jap steps out from behind a tree about ten yards ahead of us, bowing and smiling. He was wearing dirty white shorts, a pair of brown slippers, and didn't show any gun.

"What the hell is this?" one of the Marines said, as we stood there looking at this Jap. "What we supposed to do?"

"Let's slug him and get the hell out of here," another fellow broke in.

I said, wait a minute, told our Kentucky sharpshooter to keep his eye on the Jap, and approached him. He was smiling broadly, and making every sign to show he meant no harm. But we were taking no chances. There's nothing more treacherous than a Jap, and we knew it. As I came near, he bowed until I thought his back would snap. He even had his hands together as if he was praying to me.

I searched his shorts for weapons—we'd been told they sometimes hid guns in their loincloths—but he had none. He began to jabber something in Japanese. I jerked my thumb forward, and he went. We all trooped back to our company with our Jap prisoner.

What got most of us was to learn later that he was wearing the Captain's shorts. How that Jap got them, we never learned. Anyway, that was the gag of the camp that day.

About 10 A.M. that morning we set out for the return to the beach. We got there and set to work putting up defensive positions to fortify the beach—just in case. We began digging fox holes—you never have enough of them—and fixing up gun emplacements, when the sort of person you'd never expect to see there walks up. He's a white man dressed in tropical shorts and shirt, and behind him came two natives who certainly didn't look like the headhunters we thought we'd find on Guadalcanal. As for the white man, I almost expected him to offer us whisky and soda. He looked like a movie-style European in the hot countries, the sort that's always sitting at a small

table on a hotel veranda in Cairo or Singapore or somewhere like that. He began to talk to one of our officers. I turned to a sergeant. "Who's the guy?" I asked. He checked and told me the man used to work for Lever Bros. who owned the grove, and that he was going to act as a guide. Guide, I thought; guide to where? It looked as if we were going to be the marchingest, exploringest bunch of Marines on the island.

The new order came soon enough. Prepare to march up the beach to a Village A. What we were going to do there I didn't know. But in a couple of minutes we were following the white man and the two natives up a trail that circled the beach and had been made by natives of Guadalcanal when they carried loads of coconuts from plantation to plantation. You were able to see the ocean from the trail, but nobody on the beach could see you.

About two o'clock in the afternoon we got to the village. It wasn't much to look at: a typical village which the Japs had taken over from the natives with half a dozen huts, made of grass and branches, and then a taller hut in the center. I was surprised to see a rough cross on top of the tall hut. Missionaries? But where were they? What had happened to them? We paused for a few minutes in the village. Our officers checked whatever there was to check, and then the order came to move on again. Not until late that afternoon did we get a ten-minute break. Then I learned about the missionaries. Someone motioned to one of the two natives.

"Hey, Mac!" he yelled. The native, small, black and shining, with half a dozen iron bands on his arms, came over, friendly as anything.

"You talk English?" he was asked. Yes, he spoke English, he said, proudly. And he did, after a fashion.

I pointed to the cross. "Catholic?"

Mac nodded energetically.

"Where they now?" I asked. "Where your people?"

His smile vanished. "Jap come, takem men, makum work," he said. "Take women for men." Bit by bit the story came out.

After the Japs had taken the first villages, native runners spread the alarm; led by the Catholic missionaries, village after village was evacuated, and the natives took to the hills in the interior.

As we were learning this, another figure came out of the jungle. It was another native. He was carrying a large woven basket filled with fresh food—fish, coconuts, bananas, papaya, and all kinds of native fruits. He put it down in front of us, grinned widely, exhibiting a row of jagged teeth, and we knew we could help ourselves.

We didn't need a second invitation. While Mac looked on with paternal satisfaction, we practically demolished everything in the basket. You don't know how wonderful fresh food is until you've lived on rations for a couple of days.

We began marching again. By this time the sun was sinking and we prepared to bivouac for the night. It was our third night, and, for the first time, I can say that nothing eventful happened. No screams, no naval battles, nothing. We really slept that night.

Early on the fourth day we came to a small field. My job was to measure it for a possible airport. That took up all our day. Before nightfall, we marched to another native village. We slept there the fourth night. The fifth day was much the same—march to another native village, check on it, survey another field, and so on.

We'd gotten pretty far into the island when we were ordered to start back to our original landing place. That was a tough trip. It was three days to get back there, three days of hell. Our guides fought the jungle every part of the way. They swung those big machetes and jabbered away to themselves as they cleaved through the heavy vines and chopped down those tough bamboo stalks. It was like shoving your way through a woven wire mattress!

I don't think I'll ever forget that march. We were dead on our feet. We got everything: rain, and more rain; heat, and more heat; perspiration, bugs, mosquitoes—mosquitoes fifty

times as vicious as the New Jersey brand. At night you were so soaked from the rain the skin of your hands became pinched and shriveled. During the day it became so hot you'd dry off in a shake of a lamb's tail the moment you crossed an open space, where the sun could get at you. But if you had to stick in the jungle, you were a walking mess of wet clothes and itches and discomfort. Sometimes we were so exhausted we had to hang on to the man in front of us. Nearly all of us suffered blisters as big as half dollars on the bottoms of our feet.

On the second day of the return march we reached a new village. We got a one-hour break there—one of the most welcome in my life. While we sat there groaning, trying to fix our blisters, another newcomer shows up. It seems to me strangers were always walking out of nowhere on us. He was a thin little man, wearing khaki shorts and a pith helmet, and trailing behind him were half a dozen natives. He waved his hand as he came near us and introduced himself with a reassuring smile, "I'm Father Duhamel. I've just come back—" he gestured toward the hills behind him. "We have been there with the natives since the Japanese came."

It developed he was from Salisbury, Mass., and was pathetically eager to hear news from home. As he talked to us, his eyes lit on a small American flag one of the boys had stuck in his shirt pocket. Father Duhamel looked at it and said slowly, with immense feeling, "That flag certainly looks good to me." Then he gave us valuable information. He said: "There are about eighteen or twenty Japanese in a village not far from here. Here is how you get to it."

With that he knelt down on the sand, and, while several of our officers watched, he drew a rough diagram of the beach of Guadalcanal on the sand with his finger. We recognized it immediately: we'd memorized that map of the 'canal on board ship. He jabbed his finger into one spot on the beachline. "That's where it is," he said. "You boys go there and clean 'em out, and God be with you."

A few more words, he waved good-by, turned on his heels,

and went back into the jungle, followed by his natives. It was a brief meeting, but it sticks out in my mind, the more so because weeks later I learned that he was captured by the Japs. He refused to play traitor; the Japs tortured him for two days and finally bayoneted him to death. His body was found, horribly mutilated. The story later appeared in all the American newspapers. Father Duhamel was a hero and a martyr.

Finally, we reached our landing spot on the beach. The information Father Duhamel had given us was immediately turned over to our commanding officer, and word came that we were going to act on it at once. A body of fifty men was picked—I was one of them—to get to the village and clean it out.

At 6 A.M. the following morning we started up the same beach trail. About noon we reached a river I know only as "Block 4" River. Then we crossed a shallow stream and were pushing on when the word was passed along down the line that a Jap destroyer and a Jap cruiser were only two miles offshore. We pushed aside the jungle curtain and sure enough, out in the distance, were the two ships. Apparently they were riding at anchor. "Keep down, out of sight; stay five paces behind each other," the lieutenant ordered.

Now, you know how Marines love to shoot the breeze. It was difficult to keep the boys so far apart that they couldn't pass the latest scuttlebutt. About four that afternoon, we hit the village, which had four grass huts and the inevitable church. We were careful as all get out, and we went over that place with a fine-tooth comb but found nothing. The Japs had flown the coop. The lieutenant decided to continue up the trail. It was a hunch, and a good one. If there were any Japs camping in that village, they'd probably be in the vicinity.

I was up in front of the column. Just ahead of me the trail turned in a sharp elbow to the right. We had just reached the elbow when I stopped. I could hear a soft jabbering. I put up my hand. The lieutenant put up his hand. The column stopped. The jabbering came closer.

Then, half a dozen Japs walked around the bend of the

trail, carrying large boxes, about three by three, on their heads. They came into full view less than fifteen feet in front of me.

The first thought that popped into my head was, "Now, what in hell is in those boxes?" Ever since I was a youngster I've been a sucker for anything in a box, for anything wrapped up.

I don't know who was more surprised at that moment. The Japs looked at us, and we looked at them. We seemed to be looking idiotically at each other for minutes, nobody moving, and then somebody broke the spell with one shouted word: "Japs!"

That did it. We dived into the grass at the side of the trail. The Japs dropped their boxes with a clatter and dived into the grass nearest them—which turned out to be the other side of the trail. I started to crawl along, under cover of the grass, toward them, in a flanking movement toward their right. I had my Springfield '03 in front of me, using it to push through the brush. *Whang!* Something cracked in my ear, and I fell flat. I could hear the pounding of my heart; I thought it was literally pushing me up from the ground each time it beat. I waited a few moments, then dared to lift my head a fraction of an inch so that I could look out. Ahead of me was the stump of a tree—about eight feet in front of me. I began to inch forward again.

Then it moved. And it was then I discovered the Japs had donned their camouflage nets and had become tree stumps. It was an amazing example of Japanese efficiency, for with lightninglike rapidity, which indicated long practice at the job, they'd broken out their nets and frozen on their knees. But after I threw off my surprise, I began to pick them off. They tell me I killed ten Japs in that little grove, picking them off as I knelt there, one after another.

Not a word during the entire engagement—not a scream or a wail or a groan. It was like knocking off those moving figures in a shooting gallery. I am still puzzled to know why

they didn't fire at me. The only answer to that is that they had discarded their .25 rifles to carry the boxes.

My last shot was echoing through the forest when I heard what sounded like the crack of a whip next to my ear. A slug skinned by my helmet and whacked into the tree six inches from my ear. *Snipers!* I lay still. *This was too goddamn good to last*, ran through my mind. I froze there a good five minutes, trying to sense, rather than see, where the sniper was hidden.

Again, the crack of a whip, and the whistle of a bullet just over my head. *O.K., buddy*, I thought, *you're just guessing where I am and I'm not telling*. I didn't move. Another five minutes. It was like eternity. I pushed forward my right knee, drew myself up, keeping as low as I could, and began to crawl, my rifle in my right hand in front of me. Inch by inch, I moved forward. About twenty feet away lay the first of the boxes the Japs had been carrying. My ears strained for the crack of the sniper's rifle. But nothing came. I waited another few minutes. Then I moved forward again. Still no fire came. It seemed luck was once more shining on me. The sniper must have moved back into the jungle, seeking more plentiful game.

I was overpowered with curiosity to find out what was in those boxes. After all, the Japs had paid with their lives for carrying them. I was about fifteen feet away from them, still crawling along the edge of the trail, when I saw something move on the other side. Then two Japs emerged, crawling as carefully as I, out of the jungle and toward the boxes. I saw them first. One of them reached the first box and started to yank it back into the underbrush. I didn't even take time off to think: I slung my rifle to my shoulder and fired. He slumped to the ground alongside the box. I turned swiftly to get the other into the sights of my rifle, but he made a mad leap behind the body of his dead comrade. I fell flat as he threw a quick shot at me. He threw a lot of lead over in the next few seconds, but all of it whistled harmlessly over my head. A lot of bullets were missing me that day, all right.

Then he charged. With a wild scream, he leaped over the

body, and, holding his gun high, bayonet fixed, he came down on me.

I saw a brown face, a pair of staring eyes, and a wide open mouth. I snapped the bolt of my rifle—and found it empty. I fumbled frantically for a bullet in my bandolier—a quick snap shot would still save me. I couldn't pick a bullet out of my bandolier in time. He was on top of me. I lifted my bayonet to parry his charge and half flung myself to one side, when a burst of flame exploded by my ear and the Jap dropped at my feet. He had a silly look of surprise on his face. He was dead.

I was in an awkward position, half twisted on my knees, off balance and still shaking from my narrow escape. I leaned on my rifle and managed to turn slowly around. Corporal —— was crouched there, almost touching my shoes. Sweat was running off his face. He was grinning.

I found my voice. "I owe you one for that, fella," I said, and my lips were dry. He rubbed the back of his hand over his mouth and grinned again.

"O.K.," he said. "Forget it." Then, "Let's get the hell out of here."

We both turned and left the dead Japs lying where they were. We crawled slowly back to join the rest of our company. It was pretty much scattered about in the jungle behind us.

"I would sure like to know what was in—" I began whispering to the corporal, when a rattle of gunfire broke out somewhere behind us. Even as the sound registered in my brain, something gigantic and awful landed on my thighs. I was stunned. I lay there, pinned to earth by the greatest weight I had ever known in my life. As from a great distance I could hear the corporal's voice. He sounded mad clear through.

"They got him in the legs!"

I lay there, trying to understand that I had been hit by Jap bullets.

I heard the corporal's voice again: "I'll get that dirty bastard!"

My face was buried in the grass. Strangely enough, I felt no pain. My legs were numb. I heard the far-off blast of a hand grenade, and then his voice, triumphant, "That got the son of a bitch!"

I tried to lift myself up on my elbows, but all my strength had ebbed away. I could feel him cutting away the trousers of my uniform. I was able to turn now and saw him break out my medicine kit and dust my legs with sulfa powder. I made out other figures coming toward me. Everything now was etched clear and distinct. Two corps men came up, swiftly. They were swell, as they always are.

"Take it easy, boy," one said. I remember how red his face was. "We'll have you out of here in a jiffy. Feel any pain?"

I said, no.

They placed me on a stretcher and carried me back along the trail. The Captain came up and walked along talking to me as the two corps men carried me back. "How do you feel, Grimes?" he asked. "O.K., sir," I said. "That was a nice job you did out there on those Japs," he went on. "You know, they were part of an important radio control party, and if they had ever been able to reach the Tenaru and set up the apparatus they had—"

I said, eagerly, "What *was* in those boxes, Captain?"

"Radios," he said. "Short-wave radios, and powerful ones, too."

I sank back. Anyway, that was that. My curiosity was satisfied. My corps men halted and set me down gently in a little clearing. I discovered I was not alone. A number of other figures were about me, and they were all suspiciously silent. Then I discovered my next-door neighbor was a Jap officer. He lay sprawled there, dead, and in his outstretched hand nearly touching me was a beautiful German Luger revolver. It had a finely written Jap inscription on the handle. *I'm going to have a souvenir if it's the last thing I do*, I told myself. *I want to remember this crazy day*. I leaned over, opened his hand, and removed the gun. I took off my helmet and placed

the gun inside it. The helmet with the gun lay at my side as the corps men returned. They had been treating other wounded.

"How you doing?" the red-faced boy asked.

"I'm doing all right," I said. "But I don't feel as though I've got any legs."

"Well, we'll fix that up all right," he said. "We're going to take you back to the hospital."

They lifted me up, and I was carried slowly along the trail. When they picked me up, I grabbed my helmet, and as they carried me along the trail, I held it by the strap. Inside nestled my precious revolver.

We were a procession of wounded, now, and we moved as swiftly as possible along a trail. We passed through a village, and two small native boys, about seven or eight, came running up to us.

One youngster pointed to my helmet. "I carry," he pleaded. "Yes?"

I let him carry it.

He walked proudly along with us, for nearly a mile. I was jogging up and down, getting drowsy, and it became more and more of an effort for me to raise my head and look at him. When I did look again, he was gone. Vanished. And with him, my helmet and the gun.

I still have no souvenir of that day.

We jogged along and reached the hospital by dark. I was examined at once. I had been hit by two rifle bullets in the back of my right leg, and four machine-gun bullets in the back of my left leg. The pain was beginning to seep into my legs. They gave me a shot of morphine and wheeled me into a ward, and for the first time in weeks I sank back into a soft bed.

Lying there peacefully, I became conscious that a fellow in the bed across the aisle, with his jaw bandaged, was looking at me. I smiled at him.

"What they do to you, bud?" he asked.

"Oh, I got it in the legs out there," I said, drowsily. "You been in the island long?"

No, he said. He had been a crew member of the U.S.S. *Quincy*, which was sunk by the Japs during a night attack outside the Guadalcanal harbor a few nights before. He'd gone through hell, it appeared: he'd been blown off the ship and later picked up by a destroyer.

"What happened to you?" I asked.

He touched his bandaged jaw gingerly and grinned a little.

"Well," he began, "you wouldn't believe it. But you see this jaw? The doctors found four teeth in it—"

The morphine was beginning to work.

"Jeez, that's something," I said, almost asleep.

"—and they weren't mine, either," he finished.

I must have fallen asleep on his last word, for the full significance of what he said did not hit home to me until I awoke the next day. Somehow, the picture behind his words sticks in my mind as the picture of war in all its awfulness.

THE LOST WORLD OF THE SOLOMONS

The Story of

LIEUT. BAYARD BERGHAUS, U.S.M.C.



SOFT-SPOKEN, quiet in manner, Lieutenant Berghaus is a twenty-four-year-old Marine officer whose home is the small town of Marietta, Pennsylvania. He is a graduate of Washington and Lee University, class of '41. During the summers of 1940 and 1941 he was a member of the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve, and trained at Quantico, Virginia.

God, those ants!

The Japs on Guadalcanal were bad enough. We could take care of them, and we did.

But those ants! It was like a bad dream. It was like something out of Sir Rider Haggard, or Edgar Allan Poe—grotesque, fantastic, unbelievable!

It was late in August when I took a patrol of thirty-eight men out into the jungle to find a short cut from Koli Point in the east to the Lunga area in the west, and then down to Kokambona, the great Jap embarkation point. If we found it, we would be able to strike at the heart of the Japanese military establishment.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon. A hot sun scorched the jungle. Although it didn't penetrate to us, the humidity was almost beyond endurance, and we could feel the heat beating down from the umbrella of trees. We hacked our way through the thick hanging vines. Now and then our feet would sink

inches into the sticky mud of the jungle floor. We didn't waste energy talking. Walking and pushing our way through took every ounce of strength.

About three o'clock I noticed the appearance of the jungle was changing. We were passing from lush, damp vegetation to a dry, brittle, burned-out area. Earlier we had heard the usual friendly noises of a jungle—the squeal of a wild pig, the scream of a mackaw. Now, however, we were moving into silence. The trees were sparse and far apart. They were dry as though their sap had been sucked away. The leaves were tattered and drooping. The grass was yellow. It was a place of the dead.

We moved on, slowly. The silence seemed menacing. Something waited, something was about to happen. It was the sort of a moment you meet in dreams, when shadows seem to reach out and clutch at you, and all the inherited fears of primitive man rise out of your subconscious.

And then, like a nightmare come true, we saw it happen. Out of the trees, out of the very earth under our feet, dropping, pouring upon us from the leaves, came the ants.

I was in the lead and lifting my knife to cut away a vine hanging across the path when this red horde of ants, each about a quarter of an inch long, overwhelmed us.

In a flash I was covered with them. My dungarees were thick all over with them. I brushed them off my arm, and another blanket fell over me. Brush away a dozen and a hundred took their place. The jungle floor had become transformed into a writhing red carpet.

They got into our eyes. We screamed almost without knowing it as we fought frantically to get them off. And our yells were made up of air and ants. The men slapped. They danced in agony. Some became hysterical. My mind wasn't functioning. But every muscle in my body writhed; each sting was like the sharp burn of a white-hot pin.

One boy ran up and yelled at me, "Lieutenant, lieutenant,

there's no trail ahead. Let's turn around and get back, quick!"

His uniform was a crawling red coat of ants.

"No," I managed to say. "Keep going. We're on our way to high ground. We'll get out of this."

He ran down the line, shouting, "Keep going, keep going!"

I began to pray. "Oh, God," I thought. "I'll do anything, anything, only get them away from me."

We were running around, half mad, when my prayer was answered. Suddenly, the heavens opened and it rained. The rain fell down on us in torrents. It washed us clean. It ripped into that jungle floor and turned it into a quagmire. The ants were driven into the ground. They were washed away. They vanished.

Finally, we reached high ground.

We turned and looked back. That patch of dead world stood out like a sun-dried square in a green lawn. It looked as if men with blowtorches had been there.

We didn't find the short cut. We made a wide circle, avoiding the plague area, and finally returned to our camp.

That was one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life. Sometimes it comes back to me and I shudder.

After the ants came fire.

One day, early in September, we were out in a field trying to flush up Jap snipers.

One of the boys shouted, "Hey, does anybody smell smoke?"

We stopped and sniffed. Smoke it was. The Japs had crept behind us and set the field afire, hoping to burn us alive.

We turned on them, beat them back with our bullets, and got out of there.

Now, the dead.

On September 13, I took part in the battle of Lunga Ridge. We were defending the east side of Henderson Field. We used a technique worth describing.

During the night we strung three lines of barbed wire in

front of our fox holes. We had taken time in digging these and reinforced the holes with sandbags. They were makeshift but strong pillboxes.

I had a unique job that night. Armed with a small rocket-gun mechanism, I was to crawl out in front of the line, behind the barbed wire, and set off flares at intervals. To do this I simply slammed the gun against the ground. A brilliant white flare would shoot up, hang in the sky for a moment, and die out.

The Japs waited until 10 P.M. to make their attack. First they threw over heavy mortar fire. Then rifle fire. Then machine-gun fire. Then, screaming, they charged.

Apparently their idea was to crash through the wire by sheer weight of numbers. But the wire held. They were caught and hung there, unable to extricate themselves.

As that first wave of Japs came over, I carried out my orders.

Just behind the wire I slammed my gun against the ground and ducked. The flare sizzled up to the sky, and in that uncanny white light the Japs could be seen clearly, etched against the wires, hanging there, for the moment perfectly still in the hope that we would think them dead.

And in that light our sharpshooters calmly picked them off, one after another.

One Jap, stripped down to a loincloth, managed to slip through the wire and gave us good reason for not missing any of his fellows as they hung on the wire.

He carried grenades in both hands. He was a human bomb. Luckily, he was shot and killed before he reached a fox hole.

The Japs took a long time to learn. They came over time and again, got caught in the wire, and died there.

We successfully defended our positions that night.

Three days later we stood on a vantage point and through field glasses watched the Japs work to hoist a machine gun to a position in a tree several hundred yards from us.

We told the commanding officer.

"Let's wait," he said laconically.

We watched. All day the Japs tugged, pulled, and sweated to get the gun up on a small platform built into the tree.

When they finished, my commanding officer said quietly:

"Give the artillery the range."

I called the artillery and gave them the range.

The Japs were ready to fire. They were happy about the whole thing.

We watched.

From behind us, our shells whistled over our heads. In the small circle of our field glasses, we saw their magic. Japs, tree, and gun vanished.

It was a good day's work all around.

The Jap shell with my name on it landed one October day.

It was late afternoon. The Japs were shelling us. I dove for the ground. Lying there, I suddenly felt as though a mule had kicked me in the leg, a few inches below the knee.

When the dust and smoke cleared, I found I couldn't move my leg. Nothing hurt. My leg was bleeding. I crawled into the nearest shell hole, got out my sulfa tablets, and chewed them.

Shells continued to come over. Now and then they would throw a curtain of stinging sand over me.

A corps man found me. He gave me first aid. I was taken to the field hospital. There was no safety there. The Japs did not recognize the Red Cross insignia. It is an unforgettable experience to lie helpless while shells are bursting all around you.

Next afternoon at 5 P.M. I was placed in a truck and driven to the airport to be flown out with other wounded.

We were halfway to the airport when an old Jap field piece went into action. This was "Pistol Pete"—a name tagged on by somebody. Its shells dropped around the truck. Those of

the wounded who could walk helped the other men out of the truck to the side of the road. I tried to get off quickly, lost my balance, and rolled off the tailboard to the ground.

I half fainted from the pain. One of the boys crawled over to me and dragged me back, foot by foot, to cover. We lay under a tree four hours. As time went on, I became delirious. Not until after 10 P.M. did we reach the airport. We were placed in the plane, the field flood-lights went on, and we prepared to take off.

I was out of my head. When sparks shot from the engines and flew past my window, I said to myself, We're being attacked. Zeros . . . Zeros . . .

I thought we were in the air.

Suddenly a Marine looked in the window at me. He grinned. He put his hands together over his head and shook them like a boxer acknowledging the cheers of the spectators.

I calmed down.

I slept.

FROM MUNICH TO GUADALCANAL

The Story of

LIEUT. RAYMOND BINDER, U.S.M.C.



LIEUTENANT BINDER, at twenty-four, has one of the most amazing personal histories of World War II. Son of naturalized American parents, he spent two years as a student officer in Munich, escaped to Austria after induction into the Reichswehr, made his way to the United States, joined the U. S. Marines, was commissioned in the field, and became one of the heroes of Guadalcanal. As no other leatherneck, Lieutenant Binder knew the form and shape of the totalitarian evil he and his fellow Marines are fighting today.

Early on an August day I stood atop a ridge in Guadalcanal. The first Navy dive bomber peeled off and dove. Its bombs went spinning down, down. The Jap transport below seemed to leap out of the sea. Smoke billowed into the sky. The flames burned red and yellow. And the dust and debris hung heavy halfway between heaven and earth.

I watched. Sometimes on Guadalcanal, you had time to think. You saw destruction everywhere and the smell of death was always in your nostrils, but still you had time to think and often your mind worked with astonishing clarity. This was war. You were war. I thought of the Jap soldiers blown to death aboard the transport. I thought of the Axis robots—German, Italian, and these Japanese whose funeral pyre burned out there at sea—wasting their strength, and their blood, and their lives. What, I wondered, was my good, supercilious Herr Professor telling his students in Wittelsbach Military Academy today?

Was he telling them, as he had told me and my classmates so often, "You are the future masters of the new Germany. The German race is superior to any on earth. No army—" How contemptuously certain he was of his words!—"No army can stop the advance of Der Führer's triumphant legions."

I watched the Jap task force come in. The rising sun painted the ships in reddish relief: four transports, guarded by destroyers and cruisers, steaming slowly in from the northwest, from the direction of Savo Island. Our Navy dive bombers, bursting out of a small wispy cloud formation, peeling off... the falling bombs, the ack-ack, the thunder of guns....

As I stood there in that dawn on Guadalcanal, watching that Jap task force smashed under the heavy blows of U. S. planes, it seemed incredible that I had ever sat in a Munich classroom as an officer candidate for the Reichswehr. Yet it began casually enough one summer morning in 1937, when I received a letter from my uncle, who was a major in the German Army. I would be sixteen now, he wrote; he could help me obtain a scholarship to one of the great military academies of Europe, the Wittelsbach of Munich. The government had just taken it over. "It should be interesting for you to see what is happening here," he wrote. That did it, I think. I was sixteen, I wanted to see the world. I accepted.

My first impression of Munich was a city swarming with men in uniform, and everywhere the swastika—on arm bands, in windows, on little toy flags the children played with. From the first, Nazi supremacy was crammed down my throat. In the huge drafty classrooms, I'd watch the faces of the boys around me as they heard themselves described as masters-to-be of the master race. If I thought I'd see a knowing grin, or even a trace of boredom, I was mistaken. Those fellows believed it. They'd been getting that sort of stuff from kindergarten. In maneuvers I gained a real working knowledge of Nazi methods. In the course of one in the Bavarian Alps, I was assigned to the *Arbeitsdienst*. We camped on the edge of a small town. Our colonel ordered the engineers to inspect the town. In

two hours he had his report. The roads were bad, the houses decrepit. "Evacuate all residents," he ordered. "Clear the town." That was done with striking speed, the dazed villagers bundled out with their children and hurried to the edge of town. We were called together. "Observe," he said. Squads roamed through the town with buckets of white paint, splashing large Xs on every third house.

We drew back. The artillery lay down a barrage of shells. They were real. Before my eyes every third house was blown sky high. Tanks rolled and thundered through the village streets. Overhead, the dive bombers screamed down. Debris rained on us. The infantry, bayonets fixed, charged.

This was no make-believe. It was real war.

In an hour the village was virtually razed to the ground.

Now our officers rounded us up. New orders came: "Repair the town, house by house. We shall restore this town. We shall set up new houses. We shall place furniture in them. We shall build new roads. In one week all residents must be back in their homes again and the village intact, as before. Heil Hitler!"

And this was done. Trains came in on a near-by siding, carrying prefabricated houses. Army trucks brought them to the village. We became an army of rehabilitation. We rebuilt, we reinstalled, we paved, we created another village.

"German efficiency has not been admired by the entire world without reason," said the colonel when it was all over. German efficiency. . . .

Here, on Guadalcanal, this was no sham battle. Here was American efficiency. All day and through the night, the struggle continued. In the blackness, it was terrifying to watch. Red and purplish tracers criss-crossed the sky. Every time a bomb struck, a splash of flame lit up the sea, and I saw the shadowy outline of the Jap destroyers and cruisers. Toward dawn, the battle died down. With the first streak of light, I made out the battered hulks of the transports, decks awash, wallowing

in the sea. The destroyers had enough fight that day. They were limping home slowly. But our planes refused to quit. They followed them far out to sea, nipping at them with bomb after bomb. And when daylight of the second day came in earnest, many a dead Jap was washed upon the beach. I couldn't help thinking, as I looked at them, that they had died for an idea—not their idea, but the idea of one man, two men. We were fighting for an idea—not my idea alone, or the idea of the fellow around the corner, but the idea of all of us. And how precious that idea could be, when you could not have it and dared not to think it, I knew. . . .

You could take that Nazi propaganda just so long. You could be curious and a spectator just so long. When I finally decided I wanted to get out of Munich and discussed my status with a secretary in the American consulate in Munich, I discovered it was not so easy. The Army would not release me. I rebelled. I spoke out of turn one night in a tavern. I thought it was rather silly, I said, to live and die for the philosophy of one man, and I simply couldn't digest the principle that Germany was the best of all possible places, that everyone about me represented the finest type of manhood, and that the United States was just a soft democracy without guts or power.

I was arrested, courteously enough, by the Gestapo the following morning and brought before a major who told me bluntly that I had better watch my tongue, that it was only because of my uncle that I was forgiven this time.

In the winter of 1939 I carried through my own plan to get out of Germany. I obtained a pass for a three-day bicycle trip. This permitted me to get into Austria. In Austria I discarded my uniform for knickers and a sweater, which I had hidden in my knapsack. And in Vienna, through means I can't disclose now, I obtained both a passport and a visa for Italy. Two weeks later I was in Italy. Shortly after that, I arrived back in the United States. In 1940 I enlisted in the Marines.

I was accepted after Intelligence had examined my German adventure and satisfied itself that it had been that and nothing more. On August 18, 1942, I stepped on the beach at Guadalcanal, a lieutenant in the U. S. Marine Corps, having been commissioned in the field a month earlier. I'd seen German efficiency. In the Marines we could answer that with American efficiency, American courage, American unity....

There was the day I took a patrol through the jungle to look over a part of the ridge we hadn't explored yet. It was a hot day, as sultry as only Guadalcanal can be. We had to hack our way through. Soon we were dripping with perspiration. Corporal ——— was beside me. "What would you give for a cool glass of beer now, Lieutenant," he said. My mouth felt like cotton. "One million dollars in gold," I said. He laughed. "I'll raise you a million," he drawled. At the end of the second hour we reached the base of the ridge. I signaled the men to take a break. I was about to sprawl out full length myself, but a curious restlessness got me. I began climbing the ridge again.

"Where you going, Lieutenant?" the corporal asked.

"Up the ridge a way," I said, and pushed on. A moment later I heard him call, "I'm coming along."

"All right," I called back. "Come ahead." I continued to climb. Halfway to the top I reached a huge tree with thick foliage. I leaned against it. I removed my helmet and was wiping the perspiration out of my eyes when something struck me across the back. A man's wet hands grabbed my throat and began to tighten.

My windpipe pained me terrifically. I became frantic. I threw myself to one side and felt his legs slip about me; then he slipped off my back. I glimpsed a dirty brown, ripped Japanese uniform. I twisted again. This time I broke free and faced him.

What I saw made my knees shake. In one hand he held a long, needle-pointed bayonet. His uniform was in rags; he

was breathing heavily, his face, spotted with patches of sparse black beard, was pinched and yellow, while sweat rolled off his jowls. In that second, he lunged at me.

I fumbled at my holster for my .45. It stuck. My hand felt the handle of my knife. I yanked it out. He was on top of me, the bayonet coming at me. I put up my left hand and grabbed his hand and forced it up in the air. I pushed my knife into his stomach. It sank in with surprising ease.

I stepped back and leaned against the tree. I looked at the Jap. He was kneeling and feebly pulling at the knife handle.

My chest felt tight. I couldn't catch my breath. Then I heard the corporal pushing toward me. He stopped. The Jap was struggling. Corporal —— lifted his rifle. There was a sharp crack. The Jap stopped moving and slowly toppled over. He lay there, his right leg twitching. Then it stopped twitching. I sat down weakly.

The corporal walked over to the Jap and examined him. He did not move.

"He must have been part of some patrol. Probably got separated," the corporal said. He pointed to my shirt and grinned. "Close shave, Lieutenant." I looked down. The Jap's knife had slit a row of buttons off the shirt.

"Let's look at this fellow again," I said. We examined the Jap carefully. What was left of his uniform the jungle had ripped and torn a hundred times. He didn't look at all like the powerfully muscled Jap soldiers we'd seen before. He was actually scrawny, small, and undernourished. When I looked down on him, I thought again of "supermen" and "Axis superiority," and wondered how many marines he had killed. How long had he lived in this jungle like an animal, dealing death all about him? What did *he* think of it all? In his pocket I found a picture of a pretty Japanese girl. There were Japanese characters on the other side.

We rolled the body into a small gully and returned to our patrol. We scouted the area for several hours after that in a

vain attempt to find traces of any Jap party, but apparently this Jap soldier was an isolated sniper.

The week of October 23 we were moved up toward the Tenaru. For three nights in a row I shared a fox hole with Captain Jacob Joseph of New York, who was one of my closest friends on Guadalcanal. The Japs were intensely active then, and our position was a hot one. During one exchange a young Italian boy in front of me refused to let his Reising gun get cool. He stuck to it without a rest. Suddenly he stood up. I heard him shout.

I snapped, "Get down, get down!" He turned around and calmly walked back toward me. "Get down!" I shouted. "Are you hit?"

He looked down and said, "Naw, I'm O.K., Lieutenant." He walked five or six feet and dropped dead. A fragment of a mortar shell had ripped through his helmet. He was dying as he passed me.

The night of the twenty-third a presentiment of death came to all of us. That is the only way I can explain it. We must have been almost psychic, Captain Joseph and the rest of us. For that night, without a word to each other, we rolled our blankets together, cleaned out the fox hole, and set things in order. About 4:30 P.M. of the twenty-fourth Captain Joseph and I were together on a rather high point. A high whistle sounded. It was a mortar shell coming in our direction. We fell to the ground. I could feel his head against my back. The sound stopped. I waited a few seconds and started to move.

"Don't look up," Captain Joseph warned. "Be careful." But I looked up. Flame seared my face.

The shell had exploded about six feet away.

I tried to look about me. My eyes were all pain. "Joe," I said, weakly. I was sick to my stomach. "Joe!" Everything was blurred. My hand found his shoulder. He was lying on his side. I bent down and tried to look into his face, but everything was blurred. Then I realized he was whispering.

"Go see Mother and Dad," he was saying. "Tell them it

didn't really hurt." His voice was scarcely a whisper. "Tell them I loved them. . . . Give my love to Doris."

Then he said nothing more. I tried to talk to him, but there was no answer and he did not move. I crawled away and found myself in front of a small pile of earth. I rolled behind it and lost consciousness.

In the hospital they told me a fragment of the shell had gone through my shoulder and struck Captain Joseph, killing him. My eyes would be all right with treatment. The shoulder would heal in time.

There is nothing I have as a souvenir of Munich, save the memory of arrogant men and their dreams of conquest. But I touch my shoulder and remember Guadalcanal, and I am proud.

TRAIL OF THE TEDDYBEAR

The Story of

SGT. TRULL LARKIN SIDEBOTTOM, U.S.M.C.



A HUSKY, nerveless twenty-two-year-old youth from Denver, Colorado, Sergeant Sidebottom has been in the Marines for more than four years as a crack dive-bomber gunner—one of the most dangerous, exhausting, and nerve-wracking assignments in the service. He participated in virtually every major battle of the South Pacific, retiring only when he was hospitalized with shrapnel wounds in the shoulder received at Guadalcanal—his last port of call.

The Teddybear's job was to soften up the Jap fleet—from Midway to Guadalcanal—and that's what it did. The Teddybear was a dive bomber, a hell-bent weapon of sheer destruction, half-man, half-steel, which dove and twisted through black clouds of Jap ack-ack to bomb the mightiest armadas of imperial Japan. I was the Teddybear's gunner.

Did you ever sit backward in a roller coaster when it plummets down the tracks like a shot out of a gun? That's what it was like to sit in the gunner's seat of the Teddybear. You're in the rear, and you can't see where you're going, but you have a hell of a good view of where you've been. We called our ship the Teddybear because Captain Robert J. Bear commanded her. He was "Teddy" to his friends, and it was natural to call the ship Teddybear.

For us, the actual combat didn't really start until the morning of June 4—the Battle of Midway. It was a beautiful day. A bright sun, blue skies, and all of us anxious to get air-borne

but no one doing much talking. We checked our ships and guns; and, when our orders came, we took off swiftly, scattering the grotesque gooney birds out of our way. We went up on the right of Major —— Henderson, who, as fate would have it, was killed less than two hours later.

In less time than it takes to tell, we found ourselves about 180 miles out—and then I really opened my eyes. I whistled through my teeth.

What a sight!

We were up 8,000 feet, and below us was what looked like the whole Jap fleet. As we watched, more and more ships came over the horizon, slow and deliberate, straight into the wind—three solid columns stretching more than fifteen miles from left to right. First the destroyers, on guard at the farthest left and farthest right; then the heavy and light cruisers; and, in the center, the precious carriers and the gray-painted, lumbering transports.

They flowed under us, three streams of armed might. Black fingers of smoke were pulled back over their smokestacks by the wind. It was clear, the air sharp and almost microscopic in clarity: we actually saw the bubbling foam roar and twist and dance in the ships' wake.

I said nothing to Captain Bear. I knew he saw what I saw. And he was busy, so why bother him? I knew he was concentrating on the nearest ship, calculating precisely what we had to do, and when. As I sat there, my gun waiting in front of me, I began to count the ships. One, two, three... I counted on. When I reached sixty-four, the skies suddenly became full of planes.

They were Zeros. In the space of an eyewink they were all about us—forty, fifty, sixty. They darted about like bees out of a hive, and while I sat waiting one peeled off and dove on our tail.

"O.K., Mister," I said to myself. I tilted the gun up a bit and caught the Zero right in the center of my sights. A burst

of my guns—and his gas tank bellied out in flame. The next minute he was gone, vanished out of my line of sight.

"Hot damn! . . . We can lick this whole damn Jap Navy. . . ." But I had no time to day-dream. Five seconds, and the second Zero came in, to be joined by two other guys and they began to attack us in threes and fours. I got the second in his engine—he went twisting down, like a red comet with a tail of black smoke. I didn't say anything to Captain Bear, and he didn't talk to me. We had our jobs to do, and talk wouldn't help, so why talk?

Out of the corner of my eye, now, I see a Zero perched in the sun. He's playing 'possum, waiting for us to get tangled up in a dogfight so he can pop down on us. This was his chance—and so he came in fast on my tail and a little to the left. He was a nervy son of a bitch. Why, he came in so close, the damn fool, I could hear the roar of his engine above the roar of our own Teddybear—and that's something up there! He was so close I could see the monkey. I'll always see him as I saw him that endless minute: wearing a red helmet, his goggles pushed back on his forehead. I squeezed the trigger. . . . My heart jumped. I'm out of ammunition!

Well, that was the pay-off. Here's the Nip coming at me, and I'm facing him with an empty gun. There was only one thing to do: bluff it. That's what I did. As he came roaring in, I turned the gun on him and held it there.

Now, you can't do that for long. He caught on fast. But he wanted to make sure of his shots, even if I was a clay pigeon. And that's what cashed in his chips.

I was trying to catch the eye of the gunner on the left of me. I waved at him frantically. I was lucky. He saw me, caught wise, and turned on the Zero, giving him a burst a half second before the Jap started to open up on us. It was a good, accurate burst, catching the Nip right in the cockpit. I saw him jerk up, as though someone had stuck a pin in him. His plane lost control. It lost altitude and corkscrewed down in a fatal spin.

We climbed again. It was at this minute that the Japs got Major Henderson. His plane was on my right. The Zeros swarmed after him, piling on him in threes and fours. Major Henderson fought back with every trick he knew, but he was too far outnumbered. He was hit. We saw it.

But—and this was something I won't forget—his gunner, a likable kid, always full of fun, didn't know it. The other gunners tried to wave and point to the pilot's cockpit, so he'd know he had to take over the controls, but the young kid just laughed. Somehow, he didn't catch on.

The plane swerved sharply. The kid looked startled and grabbed his gun as he lost balance. I don't think he ever had time to take the controls. The plane went into a spin. That was the last we ever saw of him.

The scene was still in my mind when I saw three Zeros jump another navy plane and in a lucky burst get both pilot and gunner. Somehow the plane kept flying along with our formation as steadily as if someone were at the stick. Two more Zeros peeled off, dove at it, and gave it burst after burst. There was no answering fire. The plane flew on.

The last we saw of that Jonah plane was when it flew in a straight line, straight as a die, across the entire Japanese fleet, through the heaviest antiaircraft fire, untouched—piloted by two dead men.

By this time we were over the fleet and ready to go down. We had debts to pay—big ones.

We picked out a carrier. Captain Bear peeled off and dove at her, releasing a bomb which skimmed the carrier's side. We zoomed up, climbed high into the sky for another dive. This time, Captain Bear picked out a nice, juicy ship.

Again we peeled off; but, as we went down, we met powerful Jap ack-ack, so thick it was like diving into a huge factory chimney belching soft coal smoke. There are no covers on dive-bomber cockpits, and I was having a hell of a time. My eyes were watering from the gunpowder smoke, and halfway down it got so thick I began coughing so that my whole body shook

as I tried to stick to the business end of my gun. But Captain Bear was on the job. He dove so low that we just cleared the deck, dropped our egg, and flew right into the mouth of the whole Japanese fleet.

The Nips were so excited they poured everything at us. Their big guns belched flame, and they threw shells in front of us trying to make big splashes which would turn us over. The splashes were near, but not near enough. Captain Bear twisted, evaded, brought all his skill to the fore to turn the Teddybear and get us out of the hottest mess we'd ever been in. We began to climb, and put a safe distance between ourselves and the fleet—and then two Zeros jumped us, roaring out of the sun. Then, and not till then, did I speak to Captain Bear.

"Zeros coming at us, sir."

"O.K.," he said, and we dove into the nearest cloud. In that thick, pea-soup fog we lost the Zeros. We waited a little while, then came out into the clear again. The sky was deserted, so far as the sneaky Japs were concerned.

Captain Bear spoke up.

"Not many of the boys coming home, Sergeant."

"I guess not, sir," I said, and wondered which of the boys would return with us. We landed uneventfully. A few minutes later one of my buddies, Wallace Reed, and his captain, came in on a one-wheel landing. It's a pretty risky thing, anyway, and when you consider that it was done after the pilot had been under terrific strain, it was quite a feat. A minute later I found Reed calmly counting the bullet holes in his plane.

He counted 219!

Then, I think, it all came home to me. I felt weak. I leaned against the Teddybear, my legs like rubber, and thought, "How in hell did they miss me?"

It was night.

Two Jap carriers on fire, came the report. We went up into the darkest skies I'd seen in months. That night was a black

horror. It was so bad, we had to guide ourselves by the faint orange flame from the exhaust of the plane in front of us.

We flew 200 miles, scoured the skies above the sea, but found no trace of the carriers. We turned back. The night was so inky black, we lost one plane. It never returned. We landed at 11 o'clock; we had five gallons of gas in our tank! *One bad move in that sea of blackness would have cost us our lives.*

Dawn came. We went up again. This time, we had word that a battleship was crippled off Midway. This time, we didn't miss. We saw her below, led to her by an oil slick like an indelible mark across the sea. She was one of the Nogami class, badly damaged.

Did you ever see a frightened chicken scurrying about a barnyard while a farmer chased it with an ax? That was how the battleship acted. When she got wind of us, she turned, twisted, ran about in circles . . . but she was helpless. We were the last to dive, and when we were all finished, she was a battered, burning hulk.

And now, Guadalcanal. Guadalcanal, the "ditch."

We came in sight of Henderson Field—already named for the man we'd seen killed in action beside us—on the afternoon of August 30. But did I say field? That's not quite accurate.

We were ready to come in, and when I saw what those boys were taking off from, I said to Captain Bear:

"My God, Captain, look at that field!"

"I am, Sergeant," he came back, and we looked. For Henderson Field then was little more than a level spot hacked out of the jungle, a thimbleful of land spotted with tremendous shell holes, pitted with wrecks of battered planes, and more like No Man's Land than a level stretch of ground suitable for planes.

"Where in hell are we going to land?" I asked myself.

But we got down. We landed, as we did many days and nights after that, because we had to. We got down, skirting those shell holes, and we received a brisk, warm welcome. Noth-

ing effusive, because the boys were too busy with the job in hand.

A bewhiskered Marine strolled over to us. "Hi," he said, and spit off to the left. "Tojo's been a busy bastard today, you guys better gas up right away."

That was our introduction to Guadalcanal. From this field as our base we flew the Teddybear day and night. We flew it through rain and fog. With the rest of the boys, we went up in weather so bad no pilot would have dared attempt—if we had not been out for blood. We scouted, we bombed, we strafed. On one occasion, word came that thirty-six barges loaded to the gunwales with Jap soldiers, were coming in.

We took care of them. It was a merciless business. Those barges that did not become floating coffins of the dead reached the beach, only to vomit their men into sudden death itself. When the Nips got to their feet on the sand, they tried to set up their machine guns, or they ran.

We dove at them and picked them off; we strafed them and machine-gunned them while they sent up rifle fire and machine-gun fire.

A lot of Japs who were on their way to kill a few Marines met their heavenly ancestors that day.

It wasn't all flying. There were the days we did not fly. There were the days we crouched in tiny fox holes under a merciless barrage of shell fire from land and sea. . . .

It is a strange thing, crouching there. You sit in a fox hole and listen to the shells come over. You hear them whistle. You hear them go "kerplunk!" as they land. You feel the body of the man next to you go tense. Your own muscles tighten. You live by your heartbeats. Your world is a minute which never ends.

Your sense of humor is distorted. Queer things seem hilarious to you. You're under a spell, as if you had just come out from under ether. For example, in a fox hole crowded with twice as many sweating men as it should hold, you look across the field and suddenly see a fellow blown out of his fox hole.

He gathers himself together, miraculously whole, stands on his hind legs, clenches his fist, and yells at the heavens:

"You lousy bastards. . . . You sons of bitches. You—"

Then, suddenly subdued, he finds another fox hole, curls up in it, quietly, and you don't hear a peep from him.

That seems terribly funny to you. You laugh until the tears run down your cheeks and your belly aches.

Or a guy jumps out of a fox hole to make a run for it, another fellow follows him, they trip and fall—and they can't get up. Their muscles won't respond. You laugh yourself sick. Christ, it's funny. We're all weak with laughter.

After being under shellfire for five hours, nothing seems real anymore.

Finally, I got mine. A shell exploded. The shrapnel dug into my shoulder. I went to the hospital under protest.

Before I left Guadalcanal I heard the Teddybear cracked up under another pilot.

I hope it's in the air again. It was a good Marine.

Ask Tojo.

GUADALCANAL SOLILOQUY

The Story of

CORP. JOHN JOSEPH CONROY, U.S.M.C.



CORPORAL CONROY was an artist before he enlisted in the Marine Corps one day after Pearl Harbor, and three weeks past his twenty-first birthday. He saw service on Parris Island, South Carolina, Quantico, Virginia, and New River, North Carolina, and in June 1942 shoved off for the Solomons. He was on Guadalcanal from August 7, 1942, until he was evacuated, a shell-shock victim, on September 23, after having undergone more than 100 air raids. He knows firsthand the hell and horror that was Guadalcanal. Here are the observations of a sensitive youth who has an observant eye and a responsive heart.

Don't let anybody kid you. The Japs are tough. Those Jap soldiers we met on the 'canal were powerful, well-fed, arrogant sons of bitches, with bulging, fat thighs and arms. Remember the monstrous Jap wrestlers we used to see in the newsreels? They were that kind. Their appearance did nothing to calm the nerves. Their heads were shaved clean, all but an Indianlike forelock; each had a goatee, like a shaving brush. I'd always thought the Japs were little people, but these soldiers weren't. They were five feet nine, five feet ten, even six feet tall, built square as a tree trunk; they'd come rushing at you, their bayonets fixed and gleaming, their mouths open, screaming "*Banzai!*" at the top of their voices—you knew they expected us to freeze in our tracks with fear at the sight of them. We didn't. That must have surprised them. And they

were all veterans of other battles, veterans of victorious battles. What did we do? Hell, we just killed them as they came. We stood our ground. . . . A friend of mine said he saw a seventeen-year-old Marine kill four Japs—one, two, three, four, like that—with his bayonet, and then sit down on a log and bawl. The kid just couldn't take it, it was so easy. . . .

This war of nerves, now. The Jap soldiers knew all about that. They'd set up an unholy screaming back in the jungle. They'd be off there, somewhere, out of sight, screaming like something inhuman, as though they were suffering agony. But there was nothing wrong with them, of course. They were simply trying to unnerve us. When we'd concentrate in the direction of that screaming, they'd be setting up a machine gun elsewhere. . . .

They'd invariably start raising hell about 4 A.M. Dawn would be breaking about 6 A.M.; and, while it was light enough for them to attack, it wasn't quite light enough for us to see them well. They had us at a disadvantage there. Yet I guess they needed their morale boosted, because here and there we'd come upon Japanese posters stuck on tree trunks. These showed a beautiful Japanese girl, dressed in rags, carrying a baby in her arms. She'd have a few grains of rice in one hand, and her arms would be held out, pleadingly. . . . Indication enough, I suppose, that the Jap higher-ups were devoting much thought to propaganda to influence their own soldiers. . . .

Brother, we were hungry at one stretch there. It's no secret. We had a big breakfast at 3 A.M. of the day we landed, August 7. But for the next three days we lived on coconuts and black water. It was water black and impenetrable as ink, but it was the only water we found on the island and by adding a tablet to it we made it safe to swallow. I understand we landed with supplies for twenty-four hours and were to receive more later. But a sea battle interrupted our plans, and the food evidently wasn't landed when expected. So we began to live on the Jap

rations we uncovered. A Jap worker led a guard company to a cache of rice. We unearthed the stuff, and that became our staff of life for a little while. Later we were issued rations, and we each got a pack of Jap cigarettes with every meal. The pack held twenty cigarettes and twenty paper holders. Those smokes tasted frightful, as if they had dope in them. Made you feel sort of high afterward. They may have had something like marihuana in them, I suppose. If so, the Jap high command probably depended on that to help keep the soldiers pepped up. . . .

The Jap workers surprised us. Compared to the Jap soldiers, they were puny little men, and I realized that the soldier was a class apart—even a race apart. Just as the soldier was big and husky and arrogant, the worker was small and slight and humble. The workers were obviously browbeaten. You felt they expected to be kicked and were gratefully surprised when you did not beat them. They approached you in attitudes of supplication, their hands folded as if in prayer. They appeared glad to be imprisoned. They even went so far as to poke fun at their soldiers. We could not understand them, of course, but they would gesture, imitating a soldier's arrogant mien or walk, and we got the idea all right. . . . I tell you, it was a strange and even embarrassing experience to have one of these Jap workers approach you, his hands folded, and beg you, humbly, with abject bowing and scraping, for a match. You felt it was an insult to human dignity; their degradation hammered at your own sense of man's inherent dignity. You'd smile, and give them what they wanted.

I know they were terrified of us. I remember one Jap prisoner who was taken. He asked if we were Australian. We said, no, we were U. S. Marines. He clapped his hands to his face and began to moan and tremble. He thought we were about to kill him in a most fiendish manner. Then we learned the Japs had been told the Marines were a barbarous outfit, utterly

without pity, so cruel, so ruthless, that even the American people back in the States were frightened of them.

Guadalcanal. It was always raining. The nights were cold, the days were frying hot. You go to sleep in a dry fox hole—a fox hole is simply a hole dug from two to four feet deep, three feet wide, six feet long (actually a slit trench) as a place to crouch in when bombs and shells explode laterally. Because of the nature of the terrain—hard as coal in some sections and soft as muck in the jungle—fox holes, in the strict sense of the word, were impossible to dig. We just didn't have the time for that much excavation. These slit trenches which we called fox holes were designed merely to fight from, with some cover from mortar shells. In them, our bodies were often half immersed in water. We fought virtually afloat....

You'd go to sleep, and it would be dry and hot, and sweat would be pouring down your boots. You'd wake up in the middle of the night with the Japs pouring lead at you—and your fox hole would be full of water up to your neck. The rain came with the darkness. And sometimes, if you slept that long, you might go to sleep in a dry hole and wake up in a dry hole, but while sleeping you would have been soaking, like a pickle in brine, in rain water. The rain would be soaked up, evaporated, gone, the whole place dry, by the time you woke again. But we never were able to sleep more than three hours at a stretch.

Hell, you'd get wet one day and you'd stay wet the next three days if you were in the jungle. Once you managed to get out in the open, into a field, say, where the sun could reach you, it would be so blistering hot that you'd dry up. But in the jungle, in that underbrush so thick you needed a knife to cut your way through, you would be wet, day after day. It rained every day, so far as I can remember. After a while the skin of your hands became puckered, as though you'd been washing clothes all day....

I don't suppose I shall ever be able to sum up all the bravery, the guts, the genuine, honest courage displayed by the boys out in Guadalcanal. They were afraid, and yet they took it. They had what it takes....

I guess I killed a lot of Japs. I don't know how many. I tried making notches on the butt of my rifle, but the notches got so numerous I couldn't count them. I killed one Jap while he was perched in a coconut tree. When he landed, I walked over to him. His hands still held a toy wagon, complete to wheels with six spokes. He had been carving it when my bullet found him. Talk of the incongruous.... Yes, the Japs were tough. But we were tougher.... We were the Marines.

MORTAR MASTER

The Story of

FIRST SGT. FRANCIS WILLIAM MARASCIULLO,
U.S.M.C.



ACTING GUNNERY SERGEANT FRANCIS MARASCIULLO is a virtuoso of the mortar gun—that deadly weapon used with such devastating effect in the Solomons. A methodical, painstaking, colorful veteran of thirteen years in the Marine Corps, he and his crew of sharpshooters lugged their mortar gun over the hottest fighting fronts of Tulagi and Guadalcanal and—as you will see—scarcely ever had time to permit it to cool off.

I had no more idea I was going to join the Marine Raiders than the man in the moon. But somebody said I couldn't take it—and that started it. It goes like this. In the fall of 1941 I was assigned to a malaria control unit in New River, North Carolina. That was the first time I ever had to fight mosquitoes by assignment, although in thirteen years of service with the Marines, I've had to fight mosquitoes from here to China and back again.

The work was dirty, but interesting. All day long we were out in the swamps figuring out new ways to kill those little buzzing bastards. We did this day in and day out until we were so damn sick and tired of mosquitoes we were ready to lay down and die. One morning we were fed right up to our necks. I was working with another old-timer—he was a sergeant, too—and just before noon, covered with mud and sweat, we stopped and looked at each other.

"The hell with this," he busts out. "Let's go and see the Colonel now and get out of this." He rubbed his sleeve across his face and swore. "Let's see if we can't get back to the troops!"

"You're hep," I said. "Let's go."

We drive over in a truck to the Colonel's office. We get there, and this sidekick of mine gets cautious.

"Hey, Frank," he says, "you're the senior man. How about you going in first, just so it doesn't look like we're ganging up on him."

So I go in to see the Colonel alone.

He had an office on the ground floor of the new barracks, which they were completing. I walk in. There's nobody there except a clerk sorting papers and the Colonel at his desk. He's a hell of a nice guy, a man of all work and all knowledge. I'd never met him before. I salute and stand at attention in front of him. He looks up.

"I guess I'm out of order, sir, but I have a request to make," I say.

Short and snappy he says, "Spill it!"

I take a deep breath. "Sir, I've been doing this work for a couple of months, and if it's possible I'd like to be sent back to line duty in the Marine Corps."

He taps his pencil on the desk for a minute. Then he says:

"You men have been doing some fine work here. Hold on a little longer. When the opportunity presents itself, I'll take care of your request."

I see he's busy, so I shove off.

Outside, the sergeant's waiting for me.

"How'd you make out?" he asks.

I give it to him easy. "We've been doing some fine work here. We are swell soldiers. We are still in the Marine Corps. What the hell are you kicking about?"

The sergeant blows steam. Is he sore!

I greeted December 7 with a hell of a headache. I'm lucky it's only a headache. It could have been a fractured skull. They

had hung a bell up at the guard tent when I was on duty. The night of December 6 I ran into the tent in the dark and hit that goddamn bell, rang it twice and nearly split my head open. That bell was for the corporal of the guard, and when I rang it with my head he came dashing out and yelled, "What the hell you ringing that bell for?" I couldn't answer him right away because my ears were ringing and clanging like a dinner bell. If he hadn't been an old friend, I would have slugged him.

The next afternoon we get a general assembly, and of course we rush out to see what it's all about. The Colonel tells us that the Japs have attacked Pearl Harbor.

From that minute on the Marine malaria control unit was forgotten.

The next morning I was transferred to the Fleet Marine Force, which was just a short shift across the river. My gang was split up and assigned to different units of the fleet. I was there for two or three weeks when this raider thing comes up.

I'm in a tent taking it easy when a sergeant I know comes in looking like he's lost his best friend.

"What's eating you?" I asked him.

He shakes his head. "No Raiders for me," he says. "They said I'm too old."

What the hell is this, I think; *he's no older than I am*. But I try to cheer him up.

"You old guys can't take the Raiders," I tell him, and he blows up.

"Oh, yeah?" he comes back. "Let's see you get in it."

"O.K.," I say. "Consider me in."

With that the next morning I go over to Divisional Headquarters and put in my application for the Marine Raiders. Over there I find out who the boss of the outfit is. It's Colonel Merritt Edson—a guy with quite a reputation in the Marine Corps, and boy, am I interested now. There's nothing I'd like better than to work under an officer like him.

The next day I'm brought down to Divisional Headquarters

for an interview. I walk into a large room and there are three officers sitting behind a big desk. The boss man of the three says to the other two:

"What do you think, gentlemen? This man is over thirty years of age."

The other two shake their heads and start to shoot questions at me. They ask me if I know how to swim, what I know about different weapons, and many questions which I can't mention here. I'm giving them a pretty good sales talk, and in the middle of it in walks an old C.O. of mine.

"Hello, sergeant," he says to me, and turns to the skipper.

"If this man's up for anything, I'll recommend him. He's an excellent Marine."

I'm in the Raiders from that minute on.

From now on, it's really work. The next day we're on our way to Quantico, where the Raiders' training camp is located. For two weeks we organize ranks, and train every waking hour. Most of the men are young and raring to go. After a few weeks, we shove off for the West Coast, where we stayed fourteen days. Then we start traveling again, organizing, training, organizing all the time.

One morning, at the end of the fourteen-day period, we're told we're headed for "destination unknown." Weeks pass. We land on a South Pacific island, thick with jungle. It's a tough terrain, with rolling, twisting hills, tangled underbrush and high, thick grass. The beach is sandy with a heavy surf. We moved right out to the boondocks, where we set up camp. I don't mean we built the galley right away. We flopped out in the jungle there and started from scratch—and that was the start of the hardest and toughest training I've had in all the time I've been in the Marines.

Everything was originality. Every rule was flexible. Our first obstacles were natural ones; our enemies were the weather conditions, the jungle, the rivers, the hills, the mountains, anything that could be thrown in our path. It was a daily battle

for the survival of the fittest. We learned to stalk each other in the middle of the night, crawling through the jungle. Many times I didn't like it. We were told we could quit whenever we wanted to. But I don't know anyone who did. One of our tough problems was to manipulate small rubber boats through heavy surf. We had to work in the dark, taking the boats out in the surf and bring them back. We had to know how to use a knife. Boy, we learned a hell of a lot of stuff on which our lives depended. I lost so much weight, I could count the ripples of flesh on my stomach; they were so hard and tough I could have washed out my socks on my belly. I lost about fifteen pounds, but I was ready for anything.

About this time Colonel Edson, right in the middle there with us, decided we were primed for action. He caught us a ride and we left the island, and next thing I know, one morning I come up on deck and I'm seeing more ships than I've ever seen in my life. I tried to count them, and gave up. They were spread out over the sea, row after row. They were so near us you could smell the good old U.S.A. cooking. I knew this was our task force. One of the gunners at the rail with me whistled.

"I ain't seen so many ships together at one time in all my forty years in the Navy," he said.

All over the ship there was that electric feeling that something big was coming off, and we were in it. We found out that same morning. We were to hit the Solomon Islands. That was the first time I ever heard of them. The only Solomon I ever heard of before was King Solomon. But if Edson wanted us to hit the Solomon Islands, O.K., hit them we would! When we were told this, a plan of action was unfolded for us, so that each man knew what he had to do when the time came.

The next morning was August 7. That day all hell broke loose. The destroyers in our task force started to shell a small island, which we knew was Tulagi. Dive bombers were pasting the whole place. We could see the bomb bursts lighting up the

false-dawn. Balls of flame were bouncing all over the island. When orders came "Over the side!" the Raiders were first.

We must have looked bad enough to scare the pants off a brass monkey that morning. We were painted up like Indians. Each man had his own make-up on—some had brown, some black, others mixed colors. Me, I had a nice big chew of tobacco in my mouth. We had our regular equipment along, which included everything from knives to machine guns. I was in charge of a mortar platoon, and I was just aching to start lobbing shells into those yellow sons of bitches.

It was some moment in my life. I kept thinking, Isn't this a hell of a thing! I was in the forward part of our landing boat, and I turned around and looked at the men. They were crouched down, their rifles between their knees—they'd had orders to keep their heads low—each with his own thoughts. I said to myself, *Say something, you big palooka, and give the guys a laugh.* So I broke out with, "How many of you guys would want the four-to-eight watch now at the Sands Street gate over at the Brooklyn Navy Yard?" That started them laughing, and helped relax them. Next thing I knew we were sliding over a coral reef and hitting the beach.

We went into our plan of action. I had to meet my lieutenant with the other half of our platoon at a graveyard near the beach. When we got there we found it was all battered to hell with shell craters and uprooted trees. But we tied in with the lieutenant and advanced.

Then I saw my first Jap. He was dead. He'd been shot through the chest. It wasn't long before we had our guns set up and were blasting away. We advanced all that day and night. Dusk found us on top of a ridge miles from the beach where we'd landed that morning. This ridge had a sharp drop of about 150 feet on one side. The other side disappeared into a deep gully. It was a pretty barren ridge, with just a few trees and stunted grass. The next ridge was occupied by the Japs.

We lay on our ridge all night. It was black as hell. The

Japs went to work and pounded us all night. They sent grenades over. Sniper bullets whistled around us like bees. Near morning they set up a machine gun on our left flank and tore into us. They wounded five men in my platoon and killed two more. I never had such a hot back end in all my life as when I lay there, hugging the ground, with those Jap guns blasting overhead. But we weren't sitting there biting our nails all the time. My mortar was plenty hot.

We finally forced the Jap machine gunners to take refuge under a shack on their hill. This shack was built on stilts, with wooden sides and a tin roof. In the morning our demolition men crawled near the shack and tossed burning oil-soaked rags through a window. The shack went up in flames. There were fourteen Japs underneath that shack, and they came out like roaches from under a baseboard when you spray it with bug poison. They didn't run far. Our riflemen got all of them.

In the meantime our advance was held up by Jap machine gunners hiding out in another shack in a gully across the ridge. Word had passed up to me: "Get mortar fire. Get mortar fire." My lieutenant came up in a crouching run. He pointed to the shack.

"That's it," he said. "The big one."

I spotted the shack for 250 yards and fired one mortar shell. It went right through the roof. I could see the shack go up. That made me feel better. The Japs came running out. The Marines were shouting and cheering. We gave them rifle fire and those Japs were picked off, too.

There was one gunnery sergeant from the machine-gun platoon who was always kidding me about my outfit. He'd call it a "searchlight" battery. The idea is to hide mortars, and he was always trying to tell me I kept mine out in the open.

After we knocked out that shack, the lieutenant came over and said, "A gunnery sergeant down there wanted to know who did this last one. I told him it was you. He said, 'Tell that guy I owe him a beer.' " I haven't collected the beer yet,

but I owe him \$20—and I'm not worrying about it. I'll see him before this war is over and collect that beer, anyway.

Beginning this day, the Japs began to hole up in caves all over the island. They wouldn't surrender. From then on it was a case of searching for them, finding them, and blasting them out. This job was accomplished by demolition men of the Raiders. I heard one gunnery sergeant got so mad when the Japs threw a grenade back at him from one of the caves and wounded him in the leg, that he ran in and cleaned out the whole bunch of them with his Reising gun.

One experience on Tulagi I won't forget. The second morning we had to cross a sharp ridge under continuous fire from Jap snipers. The only way we could get across was to make a run over a small, broken wooden bridge. We cleared the bridge in a few running jumps and dove for cover in a natural drain ditch. In the scramble one of the boys was left out in the cold. There was no room for him in the ditch. I'll never forget him running up and down shouting, "What the hell's the matter with you guys? Move over!"

Without waiting he dove in on top of us and pulls this:

"What the hell do you think I'm going to do up there? Direct traffic?"

For the two or three weeks we were on Tulagi, we ate chocolate bars, K rations, Jap rice and barley. The rice was wormy, but I got to be quite a hand at fixing it so we'd get some variety. First I boiled the rice in water; then I boiled the water and threw in the rice. I'd flip in a stray can of beef, a few raisins, or anything that was handy, and mix it all together. That was a dish and a half!

We cleaned up Tulagi. Then we went over to Guadalcanal.

We certainly got a warm reception there. We hit the beach at Tojo hour. That's lunchtime when the Japs came over just after noon, and bombed it. The destroyer which brought us over was hit by an aerial bomb and sank a few minutes after it landed us. I no sooner got out of our boat and jumped to the beach when one Marine, who was working with a group

unloading stuff, ran over and yelled, "Hey, Frank! How the hell are you? Jeez, I heard you were killed on Tulagi!"

I looked at him for a minute. The last time I'd seen him was in New River. I was just about to answer him when the Jap planes dived in and unloaded their eggs. It sounded like dive bombers but we couldn't see them because of the heavy clouds. I hit the dirt. The bombs fell all around the ships anchored off the beach. One hit near by. The concussion came over like waves from a giant fan. I was lifted up right off my elbows. I couldn't stand up straight for a few minutes after the raid. I got up and looked for the sergeant. He'd disappeared, and I've never seen him since then, when a shell stopped me from telling him that I was still alive.

Funny thing about fox holes and fire. They turn you into an animal. Ten minutes after you hit Guadalcanal, it becomes second nature for you to dig, and dig, until you bury yourself in the ground. The only safe place is under the ground.

We dug half that night. While we were working away, the rain came down in sheets. It got cold. Our clothes hung on us like wet washrags. I was in a fox hole with another fellow, trying to keep dry. It was a narrow slit ditch and we lay head to head and talked. Luckily for us, we discovered some Jap sandbags and used them to line our fox holes. They're burlap bags filled with grass, and while I was on the 'canal I furnished some good fox holes with them. They were a luxury to us.

When the sun came up, it was so hot it dried the clothes on our backs. We were bombed day after day. I can't recall each bombing, but it seemed as if every minute was filled with the thunder of exploding bombs. Usually after a bombing we'd crawl out of our fox holes, sit on a coconut log, and ask the same question: "Wonder what the folks are doing back home now?" But really the Raiders, like all the Marines there, didn't get a hell of a lot of time to sit around dreaming. We were being shifted, we came and went; there wasn't much time

to think of anything except carrying out orders the best way you knew how.

Then on September 7 came the raid on Tasimbogo.

I was called to a conference of the NCO's and officers. We were told: "We're going to hit Tasimbogo tomorrow morning." And they gave us our secret orders. Tasimbogo village was in the vicinity of Henderson Field, and known as a strategic landing point for Jap troops who were steadily smashing at our lines. We were to clean it out, once and for all.

That night we bivouacked on the beach. In the early hours of the morning we boarded a destroyer. We were to raid Tasimbogo at dawn.

Aboard ship, we sat down to one of our rare hot meals. I can't recall what they gave us, but I do remember it was hot. We had worked off ships before, and some of the crew knew us. They dished out cigarettes, and all night long we were on the alert, waiting for dawn.

We hit Tasimbogo at the exact hour. The ships shelled the village. Then we went in to take it. The Japs took off for the hills. Once we got to the beach, we split up into parties. My gang came into the village from the east. Some of our men were already there. The entire place was surrounded.

Tasimbogo consisted of about thirty shacks, built of straw, coconut trees, palm leaves, and logs. Equipment was everywhere, and particularly in front of the shacks. There was gear, ammunition, food, maps, helmets, and shells. We had one job to do and had to do it fast. That was, burn the village to the ground. We did just that. I told the men exactly what the captain had told me:

"Collect all the gear. Take it down to the beach. Burn every damn shack in this place."

I ordered some of the men to pick up coconut palm leaves, and we twisted them into torches. We lit them with matches and raced through the village, from shack to shack, plunging the torches against the straw sides. They took fire and went up like gunpowder.

The last shack we reached was a long, low-slung hut, built of logs and palm leaves. It was bigger than the rest, probably used as a council hut by the natives. I walked in, and there, in the middle, was a huge war canoe, about thirty or thirty-five feet long, big enough for twenty or thirty men. The sides and front pieces were carved with figures of men and animals.

The Marine behind me said, "Hey, Sarge, you're not going to burn this too, are you?"

"Burn the whole village down," I told him. "Everything goes."

The canoe went up with the hut. *Too bad, it would have made a hell of a souvenir to bring back to Brooklyn*, I thought.

Our demolition men started to destroy the ammunition dump. It sounded like a giant setting off dynamite fire crackers. The ground shook. The air was filled with the smell of gunpowder and burning wood and palm leaves. When we left there, early in the afternoon, we left a smoldering, black mass behind us, all that was left of Tasimbogo. We wiped it off the map and, in doing it, destroyed a tremendously important Jap storehouse.

On the way back to the ship, we had one thought. When would we eat our next hot meal? Then we went aboard.

One fellow sized up the day's action when he looked back at the island from the deck, and said, "That's one place that won't give us any more trouble."

We returned to our earlier positions on Henderson Field.

A few days later I had one of my closest calls. The Japs were bombing our positions near Henderson Field without stopping. One day they came over as usual at Tojo time. I hit the deck near a fallen tree. I thought that was as good an air-raid shelter as any I could find on short notice. Another kid hit the dirt on the other side of the tree. I had my head down. He says, "Here they come."

For some half-baked reason, I look up. I see a large bomb sailing through the air, bound right for the pocket of my shirt.

Lucky for me, the bomb hits a treetop and explodes twenty feet off the ground. Dirt, shrapnel, and wooden splinters screamed through the air about us. Those wooden splinters were like pieces of glass. If they'd hit us, they would have ripped us apart. And there I was, with my head up and my face exposed. You got to be awfully lucky to be so dumb.

Then came the Battle of Bloody Ridge, called "Boot Hill" because so many of the boys died fighting there with their boots on. The night it began, the Japs sent over a smoke screen. It was like a fog seeping through our boondocks. It smelled like burning powder. A runner came up from our CO and went from platoon to platoon with the order: "Grab guns and ammunition. Move to the top of the ridge. Get going!" The Japs were in the gully and we moved fast, so that we arrived there just in time to meet their drive up the hill.

God, it was dark that night. Machine guns started, mortars began bursting, and our own artillery shells were whistling about. Yet you could tell the difference between our machine guns and the Japs. We sang bass and the Japs sang soprano. Even the bullets were different. Their tracers had a brighter hue than ours. They were purple, white, and streaked the night like a rainbow. All night long we lay on the ridge and bowled hand grenades down the hill to the gully. We got many a strike that night. Every time one of our grenades would explode, it would be followed by screams and wild shouts. It certainly was some night.

Colonel Edson was right in the middle of all this. He was wearing a regular helmet and fatigue dungarees. You couldn't tell him from any other Marine. He directed the fight the whole night long, and he did a hell of a job, believe me.

About dawn four Japs charged up the ridge. I could only see the upper part of their bodies because they were moving through high grass. One Jap had a Tojo flag; the other three monkeys were behind him with fixed bayonets. I spotted the shot for two hundred yards. Our mortar shell landed square

on the nose, and hit the Jap with the flag. All of them were wiped out. There was flying dirt—and no more flag, no more Japs.

It wasn't more than a few seconds later that a corporal lying alongside of me yelled, "Here comes a mortar!" It all happened in a flash. He got up and started to run. I figured he saw it coming and he was getting out of the way. So I followed him. Two other guys did the same. There was an explosion. I turned around. I saw one of the men twist around on his feet like a corkscrew, grab his stomach, and scream, "Lord have mercy on me!" I never knew how he got out so many words. He was dead when we reached him. The corporal who warned me was hit in both wrists by shrapnel. I wasn't touched.

I had a strip of rubber in my pocket I intended to use as a tourniquet if I got it out in the jungle. The corporal was bleeding badly. I put the tourniquet on his worst arm and helped him down our side of the ridge. He leaned on me and repeated over and over again, "Sarge, I'm going to pass out." I told him, "You're doing all right, keep going." The kid had plenty of guts. He made it to the hospital tent. I delivered him to a corps man and then I returned to the ridge.

When I got back, I heard that the Japs had machine-gunned one of our hospital trucks that was evacuating our wounded men. They killed some of the poor fellows. This news came to me at the tail end of the battle. I crawled to the top of the ridge and looked down. The gully was strewn with dead Japs. They'd tasted all the Marine medicine they wanted.

My last job on the ridge was to knock out a Jap machine gun with mortar fire. We sent over some shells and finally knocked it out. Just then other Marine outfits moved into the boondocks on both sides of our ridge. They finished the day's work.

We organized in the back of the ridge that day. Next time we saw Colonel Edson, he was looking in my direction.

As he walked near me, he said, "How is it?"

I answered, "O.K., sir. Are we going to take out after them now?"

He said, smiling, "No. There's other Marines to take care of them. We'll rest up for a few days."

He was still wearing the helmet and dirty dungarees. He was as good as his word and kept his promise. We did rest up for a few days. Then we started patrol action up and down the Lunga River. We didn't find much. I guess the Japs knew they had met a tough situation and would do better to keep low for a while.

Then came the battle of the Matanikau River. The Japs had strong positions along one side of this river, and we sent three or four units moving up on our side. I was in one unit. The Japs laid down a heavy mortar and machine-gun barrage. That's when I got hit. Two of my boys on either side were hit by machine-gun bullets. It was a good thing the jungle was thick at that point, or I probably would not be here to tell you this story. I dived behind a big tree. Several other Marines had also selected this tree as a shelter. The fellow beside me saw I was hit before I knew it myself. He yelled "Corps men! Corps men!" and I grabbed my right wrist. The corps men ran up and began giving me first-aid treatment. Things were still banging around there.

"Beat it back to the medical bivouac," the corps men told me.

"O.K., give me my Reising," I said.

"You won't need it any more, Sarge," he said. "Someone else can make use of it."

"Look," I said, "there's still a lot of Japs around here. Give me the gun, guy. Where I go the gun goes."

I picked up the gun with my left hand and went down the trail. My right hand was pretty numb and bleeding like hell, but I didn't feel any pain.

When I walked into the medical bivouac tent, one of the corps men said, "Hey, what the hell you doing here?" It was a chief pharmacist's mate I hadn't seen since Quantico, a year or more before.

"What the hell do you think I'm doing here?" I said, and held up my wrist.

He sat me in a chair and poured a tumbler of whisky down me. I couldn't swallow it quickly enough and it dribbled down my chin. It stayed with me for a minute, then it came up. I guess I was shocked all right.

They sent me back to the field hospital. I watched the mate dress my hand and then I realized I had a pretty bad wound. Shrapnel had laid open the top of my hand.

I hadn't been in the hospital five minutes when we had an air raid. It seems as if they were following me. All the wounded were led to the air-raid shelter.

I was evacuated the next morning by plane with several other wounded men and that was the end of my stay on Guadalcanal. I'm not being corny when I say it was a tough fight out there. It certainly was.

I LIVE ON BORROWED TIME

The Story of

PVT. JAMES GERARD HALL, U.S.M.C.



RED-HAIRED JIMMY HALL *is just a kid, a chubby, freckle-faced, twenty-one-year-old youngster from Jackson Heights, New York, but his war experiences are memorable enough for any man's Biblical three-score-and-ten. Dauntless and unquenchable—that's Jimmy Hall!*

We made up for Tulagi like a bunch of kids making up for a high-school play. There we were, down in the hold of the ship, skylarking around with mud-colored grease paint, green and brown and yellow burlap sacks, and green jumper uniforms. We rubbed the grease paint into our faces, we tied the burlap sacks over our helmets, and we tucked the pant legs of our uniforms inside our shoe tops. We had knives and other equipment. We meant business.

About seven o'clock in the morning was our zero hour. We were standing, all ready, next to the rail. Our entire company was there. I'd been carrying a magazine advertisement showing a father saying good-by to his soldier son. As we slipped through the half-dawn, I strained my eyes looking at it. Next to me was a kid called Bob and I showed it to him.

"Did you see this, Bob?" I asked him.

He looked at it. Then he looked off across the water. You could just see Tulagi. In the distance it seemed like a small lump of coal floating there, far away. Bob was a tough guy, tough as nails. He had both arms tattooed, the word "Mother"

in a nice design on his right arm, the Marine Corps insignia on his left. He sniffed the air. It was damp and misty.

He said, to nobody in particular, "What a hell of a day to die."

As he said that, we saw our planes roaring down on the island. We were closer now. The thunder began. The destroyers started to shell the island. You could see the tracer bullets, like bits of fiery hail, dancing all over the island as the planes let go. Then came an order: "Landing party away!"

We hopped into the Higgins boats. They were at deck level. The ropes creaked and down we went to the sea. We didn't go right in to the island. We had a rendezvous with other boats in the ocean, and so we churned around in circles behind the destroyer, waiting for the rest of the boats to come there.

I was terribly eager. My stomach was jumping around like a yo-yo. One or two of the fellows made some corny cracks. We laughed. I remember thinking, that's a forced laugh, but you laughed in spite of yourself. Then we started for the island. Overhead, the cruiser began shelling the island in earnest, and as those huge shells passed over us, they moaned their way through the sky.

It seemed like forever before we could make out the beach clearly. Halfway there, the Japs began to reply. We got the first blast from their machine guns. We kept low and saw the tracers going over our heads. We were zigzagging our way in, and as we came near the beach we passed over a coral reef. It was a high one, and the boat scraped bottom—a terrible sound. Some of the fellows thought we were hit. They jumped up, yelling, but our coxwain gave a mighty yell: "Keep down! Keep down!" We all ducked. He took the boat out, applied more power, and we rode over the reef and hit the beach. Then the Japs gave us hell. Two of our fellows were hit. Our starboard gunner kept his eyes open, though. He had a Lewis machine gun in front of the boat. He spotted the tracers, swung his gun, and blasted away at the Jap positions.

Over the burst of our guns we heard the bullets hit the

metal shields of the Jap guns. We heard the sharp ping! ping! ping!

Then we scraped bottom. We were in!

We raced over the beach swiftly and plunged into a jungle so dense you couldn't see more than a few feet ahead. Growing things were everywhere, plants with leaves half as big as a man, tangled underbrush, mud and muck, trees and vines. We made use of the leaves. We hid behind them more than once.

Then came our first order on Tulagi. "Scouts out!" The scouts went out. A few minutes later, they returned. No Japs in sight. Then we went out. And all that morning, that first morning on Tulagi, we hunted for Japs and couldn't find them. Some of the guys were sore. One Marine cracked: "What the hell is this, another maneuver?" It got hotter and hotter.

"Jeez," said one of the fellows, "I wish to God it would rain." We soon regretted that wish. We didn't know then it was going to rain for the next three days. Late that day we hit the two main towns on Tulagi, New Chinatown and Old Chinatown.

You could see the Japs had left in a hurry. We found bathtubs half filled with water, layouts of clothes, Jap uniforms, half-eaten food on tables. New Chinatown was quite a place. It was a village of about two hundred houses. If you were a Marine, this is the way it would look to you.

You crouch as you make your way between a number of small warehouses on your left, and empty, barnlike buildings on your right. Then you come into the center of town. The first thing you see is a two-story affair. The porch is blown off. The windows are out. There are bullet holes all through the door and the front of the building. And over the door, swinging in the wind, is a bullet pock-marked sign, "Tulagi Hotel," in black letters on a white base. This was the part of Tulagi originally occupied by the British before the Japs came in and took over.

Not far away there's a small, neat, two-story house, with

lace curtains flapping through the paneless windows. The steps are blown off. A large sign over the door reads, "Chinese Consulate," also full of bullet holes. This became the headquarters of our CO. There wasn't a single house with a pane of glass. Our Navy dive bombers sure gave that town a pasting.

We watched ourselves there. All our orders were by hand signal: nobody dared to talk out loud. Japs might be hiding anywhere. We weren't taking any chances. As we moved on, our corporal held up his hand. I dove behind a piece of twisted sheet metal a few feet to my left. The corporal pointed to a small hill about 200 feet ahead of us. As we watched, holding our breaths, we saw four or five running shapes of men silhouetted against the crest. At the same moment half a dozen shots rang out from the boys behind us. I couldn't tell whether we'd gotten any of the running shapes.

Those were the first of the yellow monkeys we'd seen so far.

"Take a break," the corporal whispered. He spoke for a moment with our lieutenant, a tall, lanky Texan, a wonderful officer and a swell guy. The corporal came back. Tex took out a cigarette and lit it calmly. Somewhere far away, from the other side of the island, came the sound of shots. We knew the Marines were busy over there.

We broke out our rations and grabbed a bite, sitting in the shadow of the little, empty cottages. Then we sat around, waiting.

Word came unexpectedly that a Jap machine gun was securely set up behind a rambling brick-and-dirt sea wall. We were off at a 45-degree angle from it, and if we could get up about ten feet in the air we would have a clear view of it. Tex decided to pick a couple of men and take care of the gun. We all moved up a few yards, and I took a position under what turned out to be a Jap machine shop built on stilts. It was a small wooden hut, but inside it, I discovered later, were engines, turbines, and tools. Tex decided he'd better have three men, and off they went, crawling slowly. They had advanced on

hands and knees about fifty feet when Jap snipers began to pick at them. My platoon immediately broke into a skirmish line—that is, the men so staggered that a machine-gun burst wouldn't be likely to get many men at a time. I had a good view of Tex. He was crawling on his stomach. Now he held up his hand—we were about twenty-five feet behind him—and we started to follow him. Bit by bit he and the three Marines moved forward until they were a few feet from the sea wall, which was nearly four feet high.

Tex and the fellows hugged the wall for a few minutes. The Jap machine gun suddenly began blasting away at them. Bullets bounced off the top of the wall, sending up little puffs of dirt and shattered brick. The gun died down. Tex looked around at us. What a guy he was! Right there in the jaws of hell, and cool as a cucumber! He moved his palm forward: he was going to jump right into the mouth of that gun! He knew it had to be wiped out, and he intended to do it.

By this time we had narrowed the space between him and us until we were about ten feet behind him. Tex turned to the three men at his heels, said something, and suddenly leaped over the sea wall.

Five quick shots. We could see Tex. He dropped to his knees, stumbled, and fell to the dirt, his right hand clutching at his chest.

The Marine behind him leaped the wall. He was hit. Then the second Marine jumped over; he fell right at the base of the wall, on the Jap side. The last man, a fellow named Jack, reached the top of the wall, was hit, and toppled back on our side. All this was done in dead silence except for the gunfire. It gave you the creeps.

There was a movement at my side. Major —— was gesturing: stop firing. Silence for a minute. A gunner at his side whispered: "Volunteers!" Instinctively I knew what that meant. Tex lay out there. We had to bring him back. I looked around me. The nearest fellow to me was a Marine by the name of Murphy.

I said, "What do you say, Murph?" He nodded. We crawled back to the gunner.

"What's the dope?" I asked. He said, "Report to Nick." We crawled over to Major Floyd W. Nickerson. He looked at us.

"Go out and get Tex," he said.

"Yes, sir," I said. I crawled back to the machine shop with Murph. A Marine by the name of Squeaky was lying there.

"Let's have your pistol," I said. I was surprised at my own calmness. He handed it over. I took off my gear, my pack, my cartridge belt and laid down my rifle. We began crawling back to the sea wall.

"Good luck, Murph," I whispered over my shoulder. He was crawling at my heels. I felt him grab my ankle and give it a quick squeeze. We didn't say anything more.

The Jap machine gun was coughing death our way steadily, but we seemed to bear charmed lives as we wriggled our way to the base of the wall. We came to Jack. He was on his back, his eyes were half open, and he was hardly breathing. He'd been wounded in the chest. I couldn't leave him lying there to bleed to death. I began to bandage him quickly. A corps man came crawling over behind Murph. He got close to Jack, looked at him, and shook his head.

I whispered a quick prayer, crouched, and, pistol in my right hand, made a running leap for the wall. I cleared it and landed on the other side. But I was slightly off balance as I raced to where Tex lay, about ten feet from the wall. In front of me was a tree. Behind that, I sensed, waited the Jap machine gun. As I looked up, I saw a Jap jump to his knees, lift his rifle, and draw a bead on me. I was off balance, running, and I could not get my right hand up to aim. "Oh God," I prayed. There was an awful roar. I opened my eyes. I was still alive.

The Jap on his knees in front of me was holding his rifle to his shoulder. But he had no head. The body remained there for a split second, and then toppled over.

The B.A.R. (Browning Automatic Rifle) men behind me

had let go with a quick blast. They had decapitated him before my eyes.

For a moment my strength ran out of me like water, and then, as suddenly, ebbed back again. I was all power again. I leaped forward, grabbed Tex by the pack straps on his shoulders, threw him over my shoulder like a sack, and ran like hell. To this day I don't know how I managed it. He was six feet two if he was an inch, and a dead weight. But I seemed to have super-human strength that moment. I ran with him and together we plunged over the wall and landed on the sand.

I lay there, catching my breath, while Murph and the corps man worked on him. But they could do little. We had been too late. Tex had three bullet holes across his chest, and he stopped breathing in their arms.

I crawled back slowly to report to the Major. I said, "Tex is dead, sir." He pinched the tip of his nose and shook his head. Then, without a word, he began rattling out orders. There was still a war going on. There were lives to be saved and Japs to be paid off. He ordered three B.A.R. men to take care of the Jap gun. We had it clearly placed, now; we knew the Japs had set up behind a banyan tree near a machine-gun emplacement, and were using that instead of the emplacement. The B.A.R. men concentrated all their fire, other Marines went to town with hand grenades, and finally we wiped them out.

As we worked, Jap snipers began to fire at us from a small hill a few hundred feet away. A detachment of our men was ordered to clean them out. They did. Our way cleared, we advanced to the hill and went up it, slowly, as darkness came. We bivouacked there, on the top of the hill, and that was the most awful night I ever spent anywhere. I heard the damnedest gossip.

It was the wackiest talk and wound up with the Second Front opened in Europe, and the war being over in one week. We kept throwing the scuttlebutt around all night. While we were up there, in the early part of the evening, we had a pretty good view of our demolition men wiping up parts of

either Old or New Chinatown. I could see little pin-points of flame—torches—moving up and down in parallel lines. Then a torch would disappear in a tiny black mass. Then the black mass would suddenly flare into flame. The flames grew and died like that. Then there were no more flames.

Darkness and silence fell over everything. The whole island was quiet as a church. I started to eat a chocolate bar: I craved something sweet. It was just as well, because that was my supper that night—my first night on Tulagi.

I tried to sleep. Sentry posts were out. But I couldn't. I was dozing off when someone flops down beside me.

"Hey," he says, "the island's secure. All the Japs are knocked out. We're in."

I didn't even try to answer him. I figured that was tops in the scuttlebutt I could hear in one night.

About 2 A.M. the Japs came back to life. They threw everything at us but their prayer wheels. Mortar fire, skyrocket, firecrackers, every kind of noise, boom, explosion, and racket you ever heard in your life. They were trying to scare us, that's all, and they almost did. This racket kept up until nearly 6 A.M. Then our corporal sent down word, "Get your gear, we're moving out." "Moving out" is a horrible phrase to us. It always means trouble.

We were ordered to the other side of Tulagi. It was still dark. We crawled in single file through the darkness of the jungle, over damp grass, roots that tore at my clothes, and mud that held me like quicksand. After a few minutes of this a runner came up from the front toward which we were advancing. I was crawling alongside a path and I grabbed him.

"What's the dope?" I asked. "How we doing?"

He made a sound that didn't mean anything.

"Well, how many down there?" I demanded, pointing toward the other side of the island where we knew the Japs were entrenched.

He held up four fingers in front of my face, so that I could see them.

"Four?" I whispered.

He said, "Four hundred, you jerk!"

I almost laughed. Not at four hundred, because that surprised me, but because he wouldn't talk anything but sign language up to now and then got so sore he had to burst out. It's funny what you'll laugh at in times like that. I crawled forward again. Our boys continued to crawl until we reached a down slope going into a gully. Down there, somewhere, the Japs were waiting for us.

We halted for a moment, still in single file. I heard the fellows flopping down, grunting as they made themselves comfortable to grab a short shut-eye. We didn't know how long we'd wait. It's funny how a guy can fall asleep right in the middle of everything sometimes. I know I dozed off.

Suddenly, screams and shouts woke me up. I heard a Marine behind me say softlike, "Here they come." I tried to peer through the darkness. Dawn was stronger now: second by second the night was lifting. I thought I could make out small, dark shapes coming up the slope toward us, but it was difficult to tell. Then the tracers started. They criss-crossed over our heads. By their light we saw it *was* the Japs coming up. They were coming toward us in bunches.

Our guns opened up. I threw my rifle to my shoulder and fired away. We'd stop for a minute, throw down our rifles, pick up grenades and toss them down the gully. It wasn't long before the Jap advance was stopped cold. We'd done all right. The Japs had pulled another of their so-called suicide attacks, and they'd been successful—in the suicide part of it.

I lay there, trying to relax for a moment. A fellow crawled over to me. I remember his name. It was Sherry.

He said, "Hey, I got a little bad news for you. Bob got it."

I looked at him, trying to understand. So many things had happened since we landed the morning before, that Bob seemed somebody I'd known years ago, and the time we'd been standing at the rail of the ship and he'd come out with,

"What a hell of a day to die," seemed to be something taken out of a book I'd read.

"Where is he?" I asked.

Sherry yanked his thumb over his shoulder and moved on.

I crawled down the trail to find Bob. I came upon him lying by the side of his machine gun. His blouse was open and I saw the telltale bullet wounds. I stood there for a few minutes, thinking, "You sure spoke the truth, Bob." God gave him one more day of life, but that was all.

"So long, fella," I said, and went back to my position.

Late that afternoon the word came down the line: "We're getting out of here, the Army's coming in to take over."

That wasn't quite true. The corporal gave us orders to pack our gear and move back to the beach. We reached the beach that evening, but we didn't get off. That was the night of the big Solomon Islands battle. The Jap fleet came in, met our fleet, and they had it hot and heavy. We could hear the thunder of the guns, and see the lightning flashes. Then we received a new order: proceed to New Chinatown and bivouac there. That night we dug slit trenches and fox holes outside the "Chinese Consulate," and slept there. All night we heard those guns out at sea.

The morning of the third day we got our first air raid. As soon as I heard the warning, I dove for a fox hole. We didn't feel too shaky about an air raid. All I can tell you is that during the last war protective camouflage was the great idea. This war it's deceptive camouflage, and that is what we had. I don't know how many planes came over, but they were all knocked down.

After the air raid we were all sitting around smoking, when someone yelled, "There go a couple of Japs!" Everybody almost died. We thought all the Japs around us were dead ones. The Marine who spotted them pointed to a small shack with a sheet-iron roof.

"Give 'em mortar fire!" a sergeant yelled.

We threw over some mortars but couldn't knock the shack

out. Then we started to throw grenades. That didn't work, either.

Finally one officer ordered: "Send back for demolition."

The demolition officer showed up with a Bangalor torpedo. This is a six-foot piece of lead pipe filled with nails or anything else that you can jam in, and ten pounds of TNT. A fellow named "Gunny" was an expert at throwing these bombs. He was a big guy, six foot three or four, and the coolest Marine you ever saw. He'd been in the Corps for about twenty years. He came up, got his directions, and stood up there gauging his distance as calmly as if he were at a field and track meet. Then he set the fuse off and hurled the pipe like a javelin.

Boom! The sheet-iron top billowed up and down like a blanket with somebody under it. That was all. It was the end of the Japs inside.

Gunny grinned, hitched up his belt, and walked away.

We went back to sleep.

The end of the first week found us with a lot of the sort of stuff you'd write home about, if you were interested in writing home about hardships. For example, we were stuck there for a while without much American food. The battle in the harbor stopped our food from coming in to us. We had to eat Jap food. It was simply awful. We ate Jap rice and fishheads. We smoked Japanese cigarettes, which tasted like straw. Once in a while we got a British cigarette—loot the Japs had picked up in Hong Kong. After we exhausted the Jap supplies, we lived on the land. We killed beautiful cockatoos—those birds with beautiful feathers that look like huge parrots—and ate them. Back home I understand they cost from \$75 to \$100 each, but out on Tulagi the boys were knocking them off right and left. Some of the fellows became sick. Some got dysentery, and they'd march around with temperatures of 104 and 105. They just didn't want to be taken down to the hospital.

We were on Tulagi, and we were going to stay and make sure the Japs would never get another foothold on it.

Toward the end of the first month, the order came: "Move to the beach to defensive positions. Task force coming in." We hurried down to the beach, hopped into fox holes, set up our machine guns, and stood by.

Nothing happened. Sometimes I wonder how many Jap plans didn't work out those first weeks of the U. S. invasion—and why.

About August 31 some fellow—I'd like to meet him now—showed up with dope straight from the feedbox.

"You guys are going to Guadalcanal tomorrow."

Some gyrene pipes up, "What's it like?"

This guy sits down to shoot the breeze. "It's swell over there," he says. "That's no scuttlebutt, either. Lots of time on your hands, and every kind of convenience. Why, they've even got one side of the place set aside for bathing, and one for drinking. It'll be a picnic after this."

Early in September we received our orders to move on to the 'canal, twenty miles to the south. The ship which took us over carried a hell of a lot of bombs. We kept our eyes peeled for Jap steel-nosed fish. If they let loose on us, it'd just be too bad. But we landed O.K. that same afternoon.

Guadalcanal wasn't much different than Tulagi. That guy had given us 100 per cent scuttlebutt. We bivouacked for several days on Guadalcanal and lost a few men in patrol actions. Then about September 6 we were called together for an NCO's meeting.

"We're going thirty miles down the coast and hit Tasimbogo," we were told. Tasimbogo was a small village, on a part of the island that jutted out to the north, and of strategic importance to the Japs. We left in the afternoon equipped for a real job. We had stilettos, grenades, submachine guns, and pistols; some of the boys had our favorite weapon: a rock in a sock. You certainly could work wonders with a thing like that in close fighting. We had some B.A.R. men with us, too.

We boarded Navy cans and off we went. We stayed on them all day. That night it rained.

It was pitch black when we finally coasted silently into the beach at Tasimbogo. Once on the beach we rubbed mud on our faces to kill any glare we might pick up, and started to crawl on our hands and knees through the soft jungle toward the village.

We were sweating our way when crack! crack!—a Jap calling card. We hit the deck but not before we'd glimpsed two Japs dive for cover. One of the B.A.R. boys gave them a blast. Now, a B.A.R. is geared to fire in spurts, and the boy who worked that gun that moment really had a trigger finger. He got both Japs.

We moved forward again. We came to the side of a road and we rest for a minute. Then I look down the road and nearly pass out. Right in front of me, clear as the nose on your face, is the trail of a .37-mm. gun. I knew it wasn't ours. We had none. I thought I was seeing things. I didn't think the Japs had heavy weapons. There's a rustle—I whirled around—another Marine comes out of the bush. I recognize him. He's a fellow from New York I knew only as Mac—a very agreeable guy. I started to show him the telltale trail but he whispered sharply, "Japs, Japs!" and pointed down toward the beach. Then we saw it. We saw Japs, I don't know how many of them, tumbling off landing barges. It was going to be light any minute; we could barely make them out. They were Japs all right.

"Get up some machine guns," I whispered.

As the word "guns" came out of my mouth, there was a sudden wham! wham! A .75-mm. gun had gone off and the shell had exploded about seventy-five feet to our right. Most of its force, luckily for us, was spent against a tree. We hit the dirt so hard the breath was knocked out of us, and as we lay there we heard shrapnel spraying all about us. Before the Japs could fire another shell, our B.A.R. men and machine-gun squads caught up with them. They fired a steady line of hot lead at them and knocked them out. We rested up a minute or so, and pushed on again.

In about twenty-five minutes we came to the edge of Tasimbogo. The first huts we came to were made of bamboo poles strung together, covered with palm leaves and the whole thing sort of tied up with long strips of dried grass. There were about thirty huts in a long row. Our lieutenant said, "Every house must be taken care of." We went down the line of shacks tossing grenades inside. If that didn't do it fast enough, we'd set it afire with grass or paper torches.

It was one hot business. The burning of that village went on from five in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon. When we had the village burning good, we set about collecting the Jap gear. We found Jap river boats made of rubber, collapsible things, which the Japs had painted silver color, and with them we found the old-fashioned bellows the Japs used to blow them up with. Each boat had a pair of them.

"Stick a knife into them all," I told the guys. "Rip everything to hell!"

Outside the huts we found some of the stuff the boys had stumbled upon inside. We found wallets, American made, and in one wallet I found a San Francisco auto license card. We found Jap flags, pictures of Japanese girls, Jap fans with little red Rising Suns printed in the center of them. We made good use of the fans later, using them as a shield for a match against the wind when we lit our cigarettes.

We were working away there, and I turn a bit and there's Mac working with me, grinning as he breaks up housekeeping with the rest of us. "Some fun, eh, kid?" he says, and he rubs his finger over his forehead and whips off a hunk of sweat. He liked his souvenirs all right: he was taking all the little things he could find, particularly Jap .25 bullets.

We also came upon a large pile of burlap sacks filled with rice, and then another pile. They'd been piled together in heaps over ten feet high. The raider demolition gang got busy and they had that place looking like a church wedding before you knew it. Rice was flying through the air and we were

covered with it—had it coming down our necks and tickling us.

The whole thing was pretty mixed up. I mean, burning houses, finding Jap souvenirs, acting like kids with rice showering through the air, and yet knowing that this was an important job and a real job we were doing, even if we weren't shooting Japs.

Finally, we have everything shipshape and we start going back to the beach. On the way we come upon the .75's that had been firing on us when we first hit the beach. An officer next to me studied them for a minute and then said, "Get some lines on these. Pull them to the beach." One of the Marines streaks for the beach, which isn't far away, and comes back with heavy rope. We secure the .75's and yell to a gang of Marines, "Give us a hand." It was like a tug of war. We yanked and pulled those guns down through the jungle, over vines, rocks, and mud, and finally got them to the landing barges waiting for us.

There a navy man hitched them to a barge. We're just about to hop back into the boats when somebody with a good eye starts yelling.

"Hey, wait a minute," he yells. "Look at them raincoats!"

He was right. There's a pile of Jap raincoats down on the beach. We hotfoot it over there and grab them. They were poncho style. They came in handy later on.

At last we get into the landing barges. We pull away. The ropes tighten, the field pieces they're pulling tumble down the beach and into the water. Halfway to the ship, the ropes are cut. The field pieces sunk out of sight. And for all I know, Hirohito's artillery is still rotting away at the bottom of the sea off the coast of Guadalcanal.

The next date of importance to me was September 10. I was sent to the front lines with several other Marines to string communication lines in the big ditches. Jap snipers were busy that day. They pinged away at us hour after hour. We did our job, though.

Three nights later, after C Company was moved up to the Lunga River, we had it hot and heavy with the Japs again. I was assigned to a listening post, and the Japs hit C Company off to my right, and hit it bad. I heard one kid screaming, "Don't! Don't!"—and the next morning some of the boys went out in the direction from which the screams came and returned so mad they could have torn apart the first Jap they saw with their bare hands. They'd found a young Marine out there. He'd been bayoneted to death.

That night was hell. Mac went through it with me. About eleven o'clock the whole jungle became alive with shouts, screams, machine-gun fire, and rifle fire. We'd completed our assignment and we knew there was a major battle of some sort taking place between the Japs and the boys of Company C.

I said to Mac, "Let's pull over here for a minute," and I pointed to a small slit trench.

We were just about to pile into it when we make out bodies and hear a voice growl, "What the hell is this!" We knew they were Marines. We piled in. There were eight guys there and they were all prepped for action. It didn't take long for the action to come.

In front of us, somewhere in the bush, we heard a lot of thrashing about as if something was coming in our direction. I would have said that's the way an elephant must sound, crashing through the jungle, but we knew there were no elephants here. Then we made out voices, and a few seconds later caught some English words. They were saying something about, "over there." I didn't like the sound of it. Neither did Mac or the other fellows.

One of the other guys said, "They're not Marines, they're Japs. Let's let 'em have it."

Mac said, "Aw, wait a minute. They're Marines, I think." Then we heard one of the voices.

"Calling to Lieutenant," it said, clearly.

"Lieutenant who?" one of our boys demanded.

There was no answer. We knew it was Japs, and we slung

over a lot of hand grenades and rifle fire. From the shouts and screams we knew we'd got them. I could never understand why they'd take chances like that. It wasn't good soldiering and it wasn't smart. But I didn't have much time to think about that. We were in Jap territory and Japs were all about us.

I said something about, "Let's blow this place. It's hot."

"You're right," said Mac. "Let's get the hell out of here."

"Yeah," one of the other guys said. "We're all blowing."

I climbed out and started to crawl. Mac followed me. I don't know what the other guys did. Mac and I crawled toward where our platoon might be. We crawled for about fifteen minutes until we came to a small hill. The grass was about four feet high. I had an idea that our company was up on top of this hill. Mac whispered, sure, and said, "I'm going to holler." He raised himself a bit on his elbows and began yelling, "Hey, there! Hey, somebody!"

A voice comes back. "Take off your helmets!"

We see figures popping up out of the grass.

Mac yells back, "We're Marines!"

The fellows up there weren't taking any chances.

"Take off your helmets!" the voice ordered. "Come up here with your hands up."

We did as we were told.

A thin guy with a Southern drawl greets us: "You guys sure looked like Japs to us up here." Then he said, "Maybe I'm still right. I think they *are* coming up." And so we all waited for them.

But it was dawn by this time, and the Japs didn't come up. They did keep on heaving stuff over at us. During the day we moved over to a ridge which protects Henderson Field and sat down and waited again for the monkeys to come in and try to take that ridge away from us.

We didn't have too long to wait, once darkness came.

Mac, a Marine named Lynch, and I were lying together, me in the middle, on the ridge, when an officer came over and

said, "You boys hold your fire until you can see them. We expect them here shortly."

Not more than fifteen minutes later Lynch suddenly lets out, "Jesus! Here they come!"

We could hear them stumbling and yelling as they started to advance. All of us threw grenades and sent down a steady barrage of rifle and machine-gun fire. The racket was so awful you couldn't hear yourself think. Shells were bursting, tracers zinging all over the place, and guys shouting and yelling like crazy.

We remained in that position only a few minutes. Then we were ordered to consolidate our positions. I got up and started to run. I'd just picked up my rifle when there was a noise like a piano falling alongside of me and somebody seemed to hit me with a safe at the same time. Then I went out like a light....

I was swimming up from the bottom of the sea, toward light, toward air. Consciousness came back to me. I was lying with my face and nose pressed into the dirt. That's why I thought I was swimming toward air. It was hard to breathe. A pain ground away at the middle of my back. I could hear rifles firing off to one side. I tried to get to my knees, but I couldn't move. I could lift my right hand. I raised it, slowly, and suddenly a machine gun opened up on me and lead spattered all around me. The bullets slapped the dust into my face. It sounded like somebody was walking on my head, pushing it down into the dirt, then stepping off, then stepping on again. I lay there. I was frightened to death. I was scared. Again and again the bullets spattered about me, making little sucking noises. Then, everything was quiet.

Perhaps an hour passed. It was still dark. I moved my right hand slowly along the dirt and felt around my back to see if I was hit there. The pain was still there, a dull gnawing, bad, but not bad enough to make me yell. My hand touched my shirt. The shirt felt as if it had been starched. I knew that was

where I'd gotten it. Dried blood had made my shirt stiff. That was it. I explored with my hand and found a jagged piece of shrapnel sticking there. I don't know why, but I gave it a yank.

The stab of pain was so awful I passed out.

It was dawn when I came to again. My back felt warm. I touched the spot again. The blood was dried. The sun was making my back feel warm, I decided. Then I became aware that planes were buzzing high over my head. From the sound I knew they were Navy P-40's. Swell, I thought, swell. The sound grew fainter, and vanished.

I was trying to make up my mind whether to try to get up and crawl again. I heard footsteps. God bless the corps man, I thought. They're always around when you need them most. But when I heard the voices, I almost fainted. They were Japs. They were Japs, coming near me. They'd find me alive.

A thousand things ran through my mind. I thought of my mother and my father. I took a deep breath and held it. I'd pretend I was dead. *I had to be dead.* The footsteps, the voices came nearer. A Jap nudged me in the side with his toe. I didn't move. Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder. My heart, which was running like a frightened deer, nearly stopped. I kept thinking, Oh God, Oh God, Oh God! and they rolled me on my back. I felt the sun strike my face. I fought with everything I had not to have my eyelids twitch against the sun. Hands began to unbuckle my cartridge belt. My back throbbed with so much pain I could have yelled to Tulagi and back. My rifle was yanked out of my left hand.

They were jabbering back and forth above me. I knew if they stayed another half minute I wouldn't be able to help it, I would begin shaking and trembling all over. I couldn't stand it any more.

And then they walked away, their voices grew fainter, I didn't hear their footsteps any more.

I could have bawled, I was so happy. I was one in a million.

I missed being jabbed by bayonets or kicked to death by plain luck.

I lay there a long time, until I was sure they had gone over the ridge. Then, I turned slowly back on my stomach. I wanted to shriek with pain. After I turned, I rested there for several minutes, breathing in and out. Then I raised my head. I spotted a small fox hole three or four feet in front of me. I don't know how, but I managed, inch by inch, to crawl to it, let myself slowly down it, and then lay on the bottom.

That was my home for the next forty-eight hours. I lay there without food or water. I must have been delirious some of the time. I know that now and then groups of Japs came over the ridge. There may have been only one body of Japs, in groups of twos and threes, but they seemed millions. I froze each time they passed. But no one bothered to look at me. Once I smelled the stink of burning gear. I heard Jap jabbering. The place seemed overrun with Japs. And then I passed out again.

On the morning of September 16 I was found by two Paramarines. They found a corps man, and they carried me back to the hospital tent. I was out of my head and later one told me they had to tie me to the stretcher with part of a sheet, I was struggling so.

That ridge was later called Edson's ridge, in honor of Colonel Merritt Edson, commanding officer of the Raiders, because his men fought so well there. I didn't see Colonel Edson myself, but I was told that he was up on the ridge, too, and missed being killed by a bullet or two that went through his shirt.

When I came to in the hospital, I saw Murph in a bed next to me. I couldn't see him clearly. He looked as if he was surrounded by a fog. I couldn't shake it out of my eyes, no matter how many times I winked. I heard him say, "Where the hell you been, Jim, you look like something the cat dragged in." I tried to say something to him but I was so damn tired and they must have shot me so full of dope I fell right off to sleep.

That night the Japs hit us with an air raid. They dived low

and strafed the hospital. I remember being carried out to an air-raid shelter. It was a big hole in the ground covered with trees and branches.

When I woke the next morning, Murph told me what happened. He filled in some of the gaps and told me how the corps man and the two Paramarines brought me in, and how they had to fight with me.

I lay in the hospital for seven days. The shrapnel wound in my back hurt like hell for the first two days and then it didn't hurt any more. After that I could get around, and was pretty soon as good as new. They made me take it easy for a couple of weeks, and then I found myself back with the boys, back on patrol, back to killing Japs again and trying to find them where they hid.

On October 8, my company was sent to the Matanikau River.

We tangled up there with the Japs in a damn good battle, too. It was an old-fashioned barroom brawl, all lights out and anything goes. The action around our position was fought in a seventy-five-foot square, and we and the Japs fought so close you could have bit them on the ear whenever you wanted to. It was one free-for-all after another. I remember one Marine, whom I know only as "Danny," running past me with a Jap on his tail. Danny had lost his gun, and the Jap had easy sailing. I jumped the monkey around the neck and brought my knife down. His face was next to my chest, and I could smell his strong odor. Of course he wasn't exactly sleeping while I was doing this. First thing he did was make a slash at me with his knife. The blade cut my fingers badly. I pushed my pistol in his stomach and let him have it.

That was the kind of fighting that went on all night.

The next morning when we counted up casualties we found twelve dead Marines—and seventy dead Japs.

When it was all over, one guy flopped down near me.

"Hell of a night," he said.

"You kidding," I said.

Later we moved back and rested. Most of us were groggy

and out on our feet. When we got back to camp, we flopped down and fell asleep before we hit the deck.

Things went on after that. Patrols, more patrols, shooting those monkeys out of trees, gullies, any place you could find them. It was not all good hunting. Patrols went out and sometimes came back with men missing. You can't kill without somebody getting hurt, sometime.

One night toward the end of November I was told:

"You're leaving tomorrow. Get your stuff together."

The next day I was one of those who left.

TONSILLECTOMY IN THE JUNGLE

The Story of

SGT. MYRON LISH KOZIAR, U.S.M.C.



WHEN LEATHERNECKS "shoot the breeze," they like to tell the story of Mike Koziar, a slight, little fellow of twenty-six with a hesitant, apologetic way of speaking. He looks like the desk clerk of your local Y.M.C.A. He tips the scale at a scant 141 pounds, but he's gone through some of the hottest fighting on record. He's called "the luckiest man in the Solomons," because—but read on!

Take it from me—it's not easy to kill a Jap. I know. I helped kill sixty of them in that hell of the Solomons. They're tough and they cling to life, and until they draw their last breath they're all treachery.

Wound a Jap and he becomes a leech. He crawls along the ground, he hides behind a bush, he pulls himself into a fox hole, and there he stays, wounded or dying, but sniping away at you until you blast him into kingdom come with dynamite or a hand grenade. He'll ask you to shoot at him with your machine gun so you'll show your position, and then the rest of his bunch will sneak in on you for the kill.

We killed at least sixty Japs in the first day and night on Tulagi Island. We hunted them out of their holes in the rocks, sent them tumbling out of their trees, poured lead into their hideouts in huts and buildings. Sure, they got a few of my men, too, but our score is still five to one. As a result of that battle, I'm something of an attraction in medical circles, I guess, because I was given a free tonsillectomy—by a Jap bullet. It was

as neat a piece of work as a surgeon could do, and I've got only a faint scar to show where the bullet entered the bottom left side of my jaw, tore across my throat and emerged from the right side of my neck. It's the only thing I can thank the Japs for, because my mother's been wanting me to have my tonsils taken out for years. Somehow, I never got around to it. I was always down with sore throats. Now, thanks to the Japs, my throat is fine. No colds, nothing. Of course, I'm not recommending it for everyone. In my case it just happened to work out O.K.

Considering what went on during those thirty-six hours—August 7 and into August 8—I can't be blamed for not knowing everything that happened to me. I was too busy killing Japs and playing hide and seek with snipers in the bushes and shell holes of Tulagi.

For three months we'd been practicing landings and training in night warfare and jungle problems on islands in the South Pacific. We would stalk each other; practice sneaking up on a guy without making a sound. We learned how to land on beaches, how to set up our .30 machine guns in a flash, how to run, crouching, so we'd make no shadow in the moonlight. We learned all the tricks we had to know, and each trick helped to save our necks. We became experts at putting on minstrel make-up, so if the moonlight hit us, our faces wouldn't shine. They were as dark as our uniforms. We'd cover our hands with the same stuff.

Late in July we were on the way to Tulagi. We knew what to expect when our commanding officers gave us maps of Tulagi and told us to make overlays. These are tracings of the map, made on tissue paper. We always carried these with us so we could refresh our memory as to this bay or that landing point. We arrived in sight of Tulagi at 7:30 on the morning of August 7. It was a swell day. The sun was shining, and our Navy dive bombers glistened in the sky as they swooped down, blasting the Japs on the island. We'd had a good breakfast

that morning at 3 A.M.—scrambled eggs, toast and butter, and lots of good hot coffee. We were rarin' to go.

Word came through the loudspeaker: our raider battalion was to get into the flat-bottomed landing boats and prepare to raid the island. The order came.

We piled deep down into the boats, and we saw our planes come in and strafe the beach. They'd roar down, there'd be a steady *brrrrrrrr!* and then puffs of sand would dot the beach where the bullets had hit. Then the planes would zoom up again.

I peeped up. The beach looked deserted. We couldn't make out any living thing. But we knew the Japs were swarming in the hills and in the town beyond. We leaped from our boats into knee-deep water. The coral underfoot was sharp and slippery.

"Watch out, bud," a guy warned me. "That stuff can give you a bad cut if you slip on it."

We hit the beach about 8:20 A.M., and immediately set up the four guns of our platoon in a semicircle covering the left flank of our command posts.

Nothing happened for about two hours. Then we got word that a platoon of riflemen was being dispatched to hunt out the Japs.

Near by was a cemetery. We received new orders—proceed through the cemetery, work our way to the top of a hill several hundred yards away, at the edge of the town, set up there, and then cover the advance of other Marine troops on an adjacent hill. Company —— was to advance up that hill. On the crest of it were houses filled with Jap snipers. Our job was to hurl a wall of lead into those houses so as to make the return fire of the Japs ineffective. The Marines were to advance up that hill under our curtain of fire.

We got there fast, crouching low as we ran. The other hill was about 600 yards away, with the valley between. I gave the range to my gunner and told him:

"See that red house to the left? Start there when you get

the order and give 'em all you got until you reach the black house about fifty yards to the right. Just spray that area with lead."

Meanwhile, No. 2 machine gun was set up next to me. It was to cover the same area from right to left—from the black house to the red. Under this cross-fire, we figured, no Jap would have a chance to get through alive.

Then we went to it!

Our guns began chattering, then burst into a roar. Sweating, grimy, cursing men manned those guns, and they were giving the Japs a real American introduction. Under the protective screen of lead, the detachment of Marines scrambled up the hill, a climb of more than 100 feet. And when we received the order to "cease firing," we knew everything was O.K.

We had to halt quickly, because if we kept up at that point we'd be shooting at our own men, who'd gotten to the top and were mopping up.

I remember looking down into the valley and seeing the Japs run from bush to bush, or fall into holes. A lot of our boys were lying on their bellies taking pot shots at them, watching the bushes and waiting for them to move. A fellow named Simovich had an eagle eye that day. He had a bead on one bush in the valley. Suddenly a Jap bounced out. Simmy let him have it twice. The Jap fell. He didn't move again.

I told the boys to check and clean guns and stand by. It was about noon. We waited another fifteen or twenty minutes. Then Mac, my platoon sergeant, walked over.

"Lish," he said, "get ready to go out of action. We're moving off."

We dismantled the guns quickly, picked up our bags of ammunition, and filed off in formation.

We saw a couple of men from Company —— watching a cave in the hill. Somebody said, "There's some Japs in there." We all started throwing grenades. About three landed inside. We heard muffled explosions and waited, but nothing hap-

pened. Another fellow threw in one more grenade. Still nothing happened. Then we entered the cave.

We found a lot of Japs—I think it might be more truthful to say parts of Japs—in there. And we found one with a knife plunged deep into his stomach. The grenades missed him. He knew we were coming in, so I guess he just stuck the knife into himself. Those Japs just wouldn't surrender if they could help it.

An order came through that another company was coming around from the side. We had to give it protection. We set up. Suddenly, all hell broke loose. The assistant gunner of No. 1 gun, about seven yards from me, screamed and fell with a bullet in his stomach. His sergeant grabbed him, pulled him out, and jumped into his place—and a Jap sniper got him between the eyes.

Mac yelled:

"Cease firing! Lay low, everybody! We're perfect targets!"

We fell to the ground and hugged the earth, mouths and cheeks pressed flat to the yellow dust and clay. We remained like that for the next two hours. I began to feel hungry. I managed to reach around and get a chocolate bar from my pack. I chewed on that. I could feel the sandy grit between my teeth. I got some water out of my canteen and finished off with that.

The eight of us were lying behind a bush, my two gunners right behind the gun, I behind them, my ammunition men with five bags of .30 caliber bullets directly in back of me.

Once, the sergeant of No. 3 gun, a few yards away, looked over at me and whispered: "Tola, Melinge," which means, "Hello Marine!" in native dialect. I grinned back at him. Near by was another bunch of guys. Some of them were singing under their breath a song called "Mamie Riley." Just the same, everybody tried to keep as quiet as possible. There were Jap snipers all over the place and the slightest sound or move would bring a hail of Jap bullets. I could still hear a lot of firing. The crack of rifles echoed sharply up from the valley.

Suddenly this fellow Simovich lets go again with his rifle. He fires seven times at a palm tree and a dead Jap tumbles out.

Just then the Navy dive bombers show up again. They peel off about 2,000 yards from us on our right flank. Their target is a big building full of the Japs. Before the war the British used it as a prison.

Our planes dived, coming down at terrific speed. For a moment they seemed to hang motionless in the air. That's when they pull out of their dive and let their bombs go. I can see the eggs heading for the target. They hit and explode at the same time—a terrific noise. Thick black smoke billows out, smoke and debris that scatters everywhere. The ground shakes.

I think to myself, "Boy, I'm glad they picked the right spot. Just too bad if they got their areas mixed up and started bombing us."

We stay there a long time. I was day-dreaming, thinking how I'd like to be in a lot of places back in the States. It's going to be a long time before I get back, I thought. Then a runner crawled up to me. He nudged me in the side.

"Lieutenant —— says you're supposed to pull out."

Instead of staying there for the night, he said, we were to move back to the rear about thirty yards, just in case the Japs decided to sneak up on us in the dark. I gave that order, leaving one man behind as an outpost.

Clouds covered the moon that night off and on. During one dark stretch, we crawled away from the bush to a point farther back, where we could sit up and relax and ease our bones and muscles. We ached from lying flat against the ground so long.

Mac told me, "We stay here and try to get some sleep. We're going to move off early in the morning."

Some of the boys broke out their rations and began to eat canned stew, canned hash, and biscuits. I had some, too. It was tasty and satisfying. About half an hour after midnight, I got word that the Japs were sneaking up. I woke up my

men, called in our outpost, and began moving to the right, about twenty yards, into a dark, wooded area.

"We've got to form a defense line here," Mac said. "Get your gun up on the left flank."

We formed a semicircle with our four guns and waited. My orders were not to fire blindly at anything that moved, because it might be our own men. We'd also give away our position. I set up my gun with the gunner behind it, the assistant gunner alongside. I placed one of my ammunition men three yards to the left of the gun, another three yards to the right, gave each a couple of grenades, and then assigned the others behind with still more ammunition.

"No firing unless we're mobbed," I ordered the gunners. I told the other guys, "If you see Japs coming up, don't fire. Throw a grenade."

For at least an hour we waited there. We heard shots off in the distance. Once we heard a Jap shouting—probably an officer who was so mad he didn't care about giving away his position. Either that or he thought himself so safe he didn't give a damn. Of course I couldn't make out what he said.

For some reason I looked to my right and saw a bush move. No mistake about it. I watched it. It moved.

"There's something moving out there," I whispered to Robby. "I'm going to find out."

"Aw, it's only another gyrene (Marine)," he said.

"I'm checking anyways," I said. Holding my rifle in my right hand, I crawled forward slowly, keeping low in the grass. Then I saw the back of a man. He was wearing a Marine helmet. But I wanted to make sure.

I drew a bead on him and said suddenly:

"Is that you, bud?"

He turned around like a flash.

"Yeah," he said, and I knew it was O.K. I could see his face only faintly, because of his dark make-up, but I knew no Jap could imitate that "Yeah." I said, "How's it going?"

"Kinda tough," he answered.

"So long, bud," I said, and started creeping back.

The moon came out from behind a cloud. I stopped. The entire island was lit up under that white light, but nothing moved. I saw the bushes, the high grass, the trees, the dark shadows in the wooded area which I knew was full of Marines.

The moon went behind a cloud for a minute. I started moving again on my hands and knees. Then the moon must have come out suddenly, and whamo! I got hit.

It's a funny sensation. At least it was for me. It felt as though somebody had cracked me on the jaw, and I raised my hands to my face. I was gushing blood, some of it going down my throat. I began to choke a little. I didn't feel pain—then. I swallowed and spit, and I was sore as hell. Some dirty so-and-so got a lucky hit on me. I was so sore I was burning up.

I grabbed my rifle and started to crawl again. I wanted one thing—to get into those woods. I was on my hands and knees, just beginning to lift my head, when something busted me on the head. I thought, That's me. I'm through. Here it is. I thought a grenade popped near me. I said, "Oh—oh—" and felt my brain going around in circles, and then I just passed out. I knew I was passing out, but there wasn't anything I could do about it. I just plumped to the ground.

When I came to, I was on my stomach, my rifle next to me. My jaw was sore as hell. I couldn't open my mouth more than half an inch. I started spitting blood again. My face was wet with blood, and it was tricking down my neck onto my chest. I managed to get going again, crawling forward, and reached the shadows of the woods. I heard voices. The words were English. I mumbled, "Is there a corps man around?"

Corps men are members of the medical corps.

I heard a voice say, "Yeah, what's the matter?"

"I've been hit," I said. "How about patching me up?"

"Sure thing," the voice said. A fellow came out of the darkness. I was near a tree. I dragged myself to it until I could sit up against it.

"Where you hit?" he asked. He was bending low over me.

"Somewhere in the face and neck—here, it's bleeding like hell."

He felt my face and neck in the dark.

"I can't see what it is, and I can't light a match now," he said. "I'll do what I can."

He broke out his bandages and started wrapping up my head, tucking the gauze in here and there, winding it around under my chin until it was like a turban.

"Stay right here until daylight," he said. "I'll give you something for the pain." But I didn't have any pain. The back of my head throbbed, as though it had been bumped, but there wasn't any real pain. I rolled up my right sleeve, and he needled me with a hypo.

I sat hunched up against the tree with my rifle in my hands, ready for whatever would come up. I was waiting for some Jap to come by. God, I would have liked to let him have it! I must have dozed off because the next thing I knew, the sun was up over the horizon. I swallowed once and almost yelled. It felt like somebody was tickling my throat with a bayonet. I tried to drink a little water from my canteen, but the water felt like sandpaper when it went down. I looked around a bit and there was a Marine lying near me. After a minute I realized his eyes were open.

"Hey, bud—" I began, and then I knew he couldn't hear me. I just knew it. There was something about the way he was lying there. He was dead. Somebody had thrown a dungaree jacket over his shoulders. Later I was told he made the mistake of standing up against the skyline and got a bullet right through his heart.

Now Smitty, another corps man, showed up. He took a look at me.

"Where you hit?" he asked.

"Aw, I don't know," I said. "All around here." I pointed to my neck.

"Well, we'll put another bandage on, anyway," he said, and

he snipped with his scissors twice—once on each side of my face, unwound the bandage and had a good look at me.

"You got nothing to worry about," he said. "Just a little hole here—" he pointed to a spot on his lower left jaw—"and a little hole here," and he pointed to another spot on the right side of his neck. "You'll be O.K."

I tried to grin, but it hurt.

"It's what's inside that I'm worried about. I can hardly move my jaw," I said.

Smitty got out a bottle of sulfa powder. He cut two pieces of bandage about two inches square, told me to hold each piece up to either side of my jaw, and then wrapped gauze around my chin and face again.

That treatment probably saved my life. Physicians told me later that I probably would have gotten gangrene except for the powder.

Now and then I heard the crack of rifles. Jap snipers were all around. A lieutenant came up and asked, "How do you feel, Koziar?"

"Not too bad," I said.

"All right. Here's a boy who had the tough luck to fall down one of these hills and break an arm. Both of you go back to sick bay."

Sick bay was 200 yards to the rear. We got there safely. A lot of Marines were lying around, many with bandages soaked through with blood. Nobody was yelling or making any sound. Two or three were grinning. No babies among those guys.

A doctor came up to me and began the same question: "Where were—"

I said, pointing, "It went in there and came out here," and I tried to open my mouth wider, but I couldn't.

"All right," he said. "Rest easy, now." He went away.

About nine o'clock we were taken down to the beach. A medical unit had been set up there, behind the lines. I say we were taken, but most of us went under our own power, crawling there. Those who couldn't crawl were taken in stretchers with

a land convoy on either side and in front and in back—Marines with rifles ready for a Jap sneak attack from any direction.

On the beach we met some more Marines, full of pep, ready to go into the interior. A cleared space near some houses was used as a sick bay. A doctor took one look at me and asked, "Did they put the powder on?"

I nodded.

He wrapped some more gauze around my bandage and said, "We're going to try to get you aboard ship tomorrow."

Then they gave me a little coffee. I like coffee, but I couldn't swallow the stuff. I tried smoking a cigar but I was spitting blood and swallowing blood, and so I just walked around, up and down the beach. I couldn't sit still. I was nervous. I wanted to get out of there, I wanted to go back into action or get into a hospital, but I didn't want to stay there doing nothing. It got on my nerves.

A formation of Jap planes came roaring over the harbor, aiming for our ships. Our guns and planes went into action, and I had the pleasant experience of seeing every one of those Jap planes knocked out of the sky. That sort of made me stop being so impatient. But I was worried about my jaw. I thought that maybe for the rest of my life I'd have to be fed through a tube on orange juice and things like that. After a while I crawled under a tree on the beach and went to sleep.

Somebody woke me at daylight. My jaw was stiff and my throat ached and throbbed. I was sent aboard a Higgins boat that took us wounded to one of the larger ships. There was a doctor waiting at the end of the gangplank as we came aboard. He asked me where I was hit.

I pointed, "Bullet in here, out there." He said, "All right, you go aft." In sick bay aft I was ordered to take off my clothes and wait for my examination. I took off my helmet and as I put it down, I heard a jingling sound. I looked at the back and saw a dent. Then I remembered. I'd been hit a second time—on the head. I felt under the camouflage net and there was a piece of flat metal. I looked at it. It was a .45-caliber

slug—one of our own. The Japs didn't have anything like that.

"Holy smoke!" I thought. "I was shot by one of my own men. He thought I was a Jap!"

A corps man looked at the slug, heard my story, and said:

"That sure had your name on it, kid."

Those .45's are terrible bullets. They have so much force that if they hit a man only a few feet away the force of the bullet will knock him backward off his feet. An ordinary .38 would wound him, of course, but it wouldn't stop his forward momentum. He'd drop—but forward, not backward. It's like a kick of a mule to be hit by one of those .45's.

Other wounded fellows were coming in all the time, all wrapped up in bandages. Then the doctor came and treated me as if I was in his private office and I was his only patient for the day. He was wonderful to me. He had me lie on a table and while his assistant, a chief petty officer, cleaned off the blood, he looked me over very carefully.

"This might hurt a little," he said, bending over me with something in his hand.

"Go ahead," I said. "I don't care."

And I didn't. Nothing he could do to me now would add up to what I'd got so far.

He sewed up the wound and then tried to look into my mouth but he couldn't open it very far.

"I can't get in there," he said. "We'll have to wait to find out what happened."

On the way out I saw two naked Japs lying on the deck. One was wounded in the head. They were Jap aviators who'd been shot down and rescued from the water. One of them kept saying, "Shot! Shot! Shot!"

I knew he was trying to say he didn't want to be shot, but one of the M.D.'s got him wrong. He said, "No, we can't give you a shot of whisky now. Here's some water." He bent over and gave the Jap a drink.

I thought of the good medical care he was getting. I turned

away and walked slowly to my assigned bunk in the forward part of the ship. I took some pills the doctor had given me and tried to fall asleep. But all I could hear that night was boom! boom! boom! in the distance as our planes dropped depth bombs in their hunt for subs.

I was on a transport that had been converted into a hospital ship. We remained in the harbor for a few days and then were escorted to another island about 600 miles away. There a real hospital ship, with nurses, clean linen, and everything else, was waiting for us. I was examined there again, X-rays were taken of my jaw, and then, one morning, I was taken into an office on the ship marked "Dentist."

The dental surgeon was a little man, with a black mustache and eyeglasses, and he looked at me hard when I came in.

As I sat down, he shook his head and said:

"Young fellow, you're about as lucky as they make them. I've just been looking over your plates. You know, your jaw's fractured on the left side, but that's only a part of it. Do you know you lost both your tonsils? That Jap bullet chipped them off as neat as a knife."

I couldn't quite understand it. He said, "A fraction of an inch to one side, and it would have severed an artery leading to the brain. That would have been curtains. It missed that and even missed your other jawbone. It went underneath that through the fleshy part of the neck."

"Aw, I said, 'I always wanted my tonsils out—'"

He shook his head again.

"My boy, the greatest surgeon in the world couldn't put an incision in your face and neck the way that bullet did."

He wired my jaw, and that's the way it stayed for the next two weeks. By that time I'd arrived in San Diego, California, back in the States. There at the San Diego Naval Hospital I was pretty popular with the doctors. They'd hang around my bed, and one of them would tell other guys about the bullet that "went in here and came out there."

Now—I'm waiting for my final physical while I have my

thirty-day leave at home. Then I hope to return to action. I want to go after the Japs again. The only good Jap is a dead Jap. I want to be the doctor this time—and I want to do a little operation on a couple of hundred Japs myself. It'll take them a plenty long time to get over the operation I'd do on them.

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THAT MORNING SUN AGAIN

The Story of

PFC. MARIO LEROY SABATELLI, U.S.M.C.



THE SABATELLIS—three brothers, two sisters—know what war is. Oldest sister Mary was fourteen when they were orphaned fourteen years ago, and she brought the brood up in New York. Now her husband, Frank P. Griesman, merchant mariner, is missing in action. Mario, twenty-six, former cashier in a store, joined the Marines in January, 1942. Staff Sergeant Anthony, twenty-three, is overseas with the army; Private Larry, twenty, is at Fort Meade, Maryland. Sister Antoinette's husband, John P. Elliott, is a machinist's mate, stationed at Floyd Bennett Field, New York.

Honest, I never thought I would. How'd you feel if you were out there in the darkness and somebody yelled, "Look out, there's a grenade there," and you rolled over—you thought you were rolling away from it—and you rolled over on it?

Sure it went off. But I'm alive. Maybe it's luck. Maybe it's as the doctor said in the base hospital. He'd bring other doctors over to look at me. "See this boy here?" he'd say. "St. Peter had his eye on him, but I guess the kid cheated him."

All I can say is, I sure did a lot of cheating then between here and the South Pacific. It began back in February, 1942, when I was sighting a bead on the rifle range in Quantico and my rifle instructor comes up to me on the 500-yard line. "How would you like to join the Marine Raiders?"

I'd heard about the Raiders. "Boy, those babies are tough,"

I'd heard someone say about them. So I said, "I sure would like to, but I don't know if I'm good enough."

My rifle instructor is a tall drink of water, and he spits.

"Aw," he says, "why don't you try?"

I pondered the question a little while and then my buddy, Bill, and I, we decided to join up. We passed the physical exam. It was pretty tough, and when we got out everybody started pounding us on the back and we were in. There were about sixty of us who made the Raiders. Right away we took our stuff and marched up to the Raiders' barracks, because they had separate barracks. I remember a tough old corporal, he was called Joe, saying, "O.K., boys, tomorrow morning, bright and early, we start on our calisthenics. Then you'll run a mile. You guys are really going to get the works. If you think that what you got in the Marine Corps up to now was tough, you sure got another think coming."

We trained like hell. We trained in San Diego, where we spent Easter, then we went to the South Pacific and we trained there. That was a tough place. Mountains, bad climate, hard terrain, humidity so bad you could hardly breathe. The natives were nice to us, and the young kids would do anything for us. We had a little fellow named Pedro, and he was a willing slave to us, all right. Climbed trees like a monkey. We were there for about two months when we started to get restless. One afternoon my lieutenant tells me, "There's a meeting this afternoon at Colonel Edson's headquarters." That was the beginning of everything.

"Boys," he said, "I know you've been waiting for action for a long time. I know you're getting restless. We won't be here very long. We'll be shoving off any day now. Take it easy."

That made us feel a lot better. Then one day we did shove off. We didn't know where we were going. Then we're all put on the alert. When we landed, we found the U. S. Army there. They told us we were the first Marines to arrive. My first impression of the island was very nice: beautiful place and all that. The natives were black as coal and fierce-looking. Some

of the Marines stayed behind to unload the ship. The rest of us slept that night in trucks, five to a truck. In the morning more trucks rolled up, we climbed in and were hauled out to our new camp, about fifteen miles outside the capital. We set up the camp that night and the mosquitoes began to work on us. They were hell.

There we trained again. We never let up. We learned jujitsu and all the tricks of night patrol. We learned knife fighting, and lots of other tricks of the trade. Each night we had a complete blackout. We weren't taking any chances. That didn't leave us much to do after dark when we weren't training, except shoot the breeze. We wanted to get our hands on Japs.

There was one guy, Joe, for instance. He really hated the Japs. Except for the war, he didn't have any special reason. But he saw red when he thought of them. He'd take a bayonet and dance around the place, sticking it into the air and saying, "I'm going to rip them and stick them like this!" You knew he wasn't kidding. Joe never got his chance. He was killed the first day we landed.

Then, suddenly, we get action. We shoved off one night, and we figured we were going out on a single raid. Instead, our ships go on and on and five or six days out on the high seas we meet a hell of a big convoy. There are battleships and airplane carriers and everything. The scuttlebutt is terrific. We're going to land at the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. Then we're going to land on the Philippines.

It was about 2 P.M. on August 5 when I was finishing chow and one of the boys came up and said, "Go midships, the captain wants to make a speech." We got there plenty fast, believe me.

The captain said, "Boys, we are going to land on the Solomon Islands two days from today. The raider battalions are going to land on Tulagi. Other Marines will land on other islands." Then he warned us about the Japs. "They are tricky," he said. "Never pick up any object you see on the ground, particularly anything that looks to be pen and pencil sets. They're grenades

in disguise. You pick one up and you're likely to lose your hand."

We were certainly excited. All the next day we were terribly excited. The night before the invasion, we got together and started to sing old-time songs. We felt good. We didn't know what the reaction would be once we got on the island, but we were pretty keyed up right then. I felt cool and confident. My feeling was that it was going to be tough, but after the training we'd had I felt this was my business and I was ready for it. I sat down and wrote a couple of letters home. In one of them that I wrote to my sister, Antoinette, I said jokingly, "Now, in case I don't come back, don't you take it hard...." Something like that, anyway. I showed it to one of the boys. He looked at it and he said, "You going to send that home?" I pondered the question a few hours and finally decided not to send it. So I tore it up and wrote another one.

Then I went topside and Joe was there. He was just raring to go. He couldn't wait until he got into the fight, he hated the Japs so much. We were laying on our backs topside. He started singing songs, and I was listening to him and I wanted to tell him to keep quiet. They were sad cowboy songs, home-on-the-range and things like that. Here we were, just about to go on an invasion, four or five hours away, and he was singing, and it was a bad night, dark-looking like a big storm was coming up....

Finally, I told him, "Good night, Joe."

"Good night, Lee," he said. "See you in the morning, eh?"

I said, "Sure," and we fell asleep.

We got up about 4 A.M. We had a good breakfast—steak and all the trimmings. Some of the fellows didn't eat. They didn't feel like eating. We had grenades issued to us, and were told to stand by.

Then Major B—— read us the last will. It was a note from President Roosevelt. It went something like this: "You are the first troops to take the offensive. You are the shock troops, the spearhead of our drive on the Japanese and the first to land

on any Japanese territory. May God be with you and God bless you all."

Major B—— then said, "If any Marines are killed, they'll be buried right on Tulagi. Your cemetery will be on Tulagi." A lot of the guys started to laugh and look at each other and say, "What do you think of that?" Major B—— was giving it to them straight, all right. "Well, boys," he said, "go out and give them everything you got."

It was dawn. We sneaked into the channel between Tulagi and Guadalcanal. It was awfully quiet, so quiet it made you suspicious. So this is the Solomon Islands, I was thinking. It got lighter. Finally it was daylight and Major B—— said, "There it is." He pointed to Tulagi and to Guadalcanal. We kept sneaking in and nothing happened. There was a lot of whispered conversation going on. One fellow asked, "You think there's any Japs on the island? Christ, it's too damn quiet."

For about an hour we sneaked in slowly there, getting nearer and nearer the harbor. Then our planes came over. We saw them strafing the island. We saw tracer bullets from the planes to the ground. Then we saw fires started on Tulagi, and when the anti-aircraft Jap guns fired back, we realized there were Japs there all right. The order came, "Stand by!"

We crammed into Higgins boats. Our warships were shelling the beach. We were told to stay down below. Once in a while some guy'd raise his head and someone would growl, "Keep your damn head down, there's a machine gun on that island, you'll lose it pretty goddamn fast." We hit the beach about 8 A.M. The fellow who got off the boat before me sank up to his waist in the water. I jumped down after him with my rifle and pack and I went down in water over my head. I guess I hit a hole. I bobbed up again and got on the beach, soaking wet, my gas mask all soaking wet, and my rifle wet. But nobody shot at me. Nothing happened. We didn't meet resistance on the island until noontime. As I understand it, we landed on one side of the island and the Japs were on the

other side. The first we knew of firing was when we heard the rattling of the Jap machine guns.

We moved in on them. I hid behind some logs. There were about four of us lying behind there. I could hear the bullets coming up from the valley, where the Japs were.

One guy said, "That sounds like the real thing, doesn't it?"

And I said, "Well, by God, you stick your head up and you'll find out."

A machine gunner was at a machine gun in front of us. He stood up behind the gun, his hands on his hips, and then he went down, fast. We thought he'd just taken cover. His buddies looked at him and saw he was dead, with a two-inch hole in his chest.

About four o'clock that afternoon, with Major B—— there, we decided to make a bayonet charge. The Japs had the same idea. We looked up and suddenly there were about 12 Japs rushing us. "Christ!" somebody yelled, "Look what's coming!" There were about fourteen of us; we had our bayonets fixed. Those Japs coming at us had big knives and swords, and they were hollering, "*Banzai!*" and screaming like mad.

We waited until they came about to a point ten yards from us, then we flopped to the ground—and just in time. The B.A.R. men on our flanks opened up on them. When we looked up again, every Jap was down. Those B.A.R. men sure did right by us. I got up and I looked at the first Jap. He was only about three feet away from me. He's lying there with his mouth open, a sword stuck in the ground next to him. I had an impulse to go over and get the sword, but there were too many Jap snipers around. The next Jap I saw was shot through the head.

We got up. No sooner had we got up than we jumped into near-by fox holes and sat there for almost half an hour, laughing as though we'd die. I guess that was our reaction. Then we get another order: "Fix bayonets." There were only a few more Japs down there, we were told; we have to clean them out of the gully. They were all that was holding us up. We

figured there were about eighteen Japs in one large hole. Behind the hole was a house, and in the house, we were told, there were about eighty Japs.

So we raced into the gully and were stopped by rifle fire. We just couldn't get the Japs out. Major B—— shouted, "Come out and surrender; you won't be hurt." His only answer was more rifle shots. The Japs in the hole were shooting through an opening they'd made in a sort of wall in front of them.

By this time Major B—— had lost his Reising gun and anyway he was out of ammunition. He picked up a Jap rifle and got one of the Japs with it. But we were caught. We couldn't get out of where we were, and we had to get the Japs out of where they were.

We turned to hand grenades. We tossed them in. The Japs would pick them up and toss them out behind them. We'd toss them in and then see our own hand grenades go lobbing back behind them, to explode harmlessly.

"Jesus Christ, can't we get those bastards out of there?" Major B—— said. He turned to me. "We'll get some gasoline and burn them out," he said. "Sabatelli, can you get back to those tanks and bring me gas?"

We had several gas tanks back a way. I'd never thought they'd mean much to me, personally, but here it was. I said, "Yes, sir," and made a dash out of our hole, surveyed the scene quickly, saw the tanks were too damn far to get to, and came back and reported it to him.

When I got back, I found him on his back. A Jap shell had gone through his thigh. But he was game as hell. "Boys," he said, "we got to get out of here somehow." As he said that a group of our own dive bombers came over and started dropping eggs on a row of houses about 75 yards ahead of us. They were so close we could feel waves of hot air. We'd feel ourselves lift off the ground and almost bounce each time. We prayed, "God, I hope they don't drop any short."

It was getting dark now. When it was dark, we began moving everybody out of the hole. Major B—— told me, "Sabatelli,

see if you can't go out and bring back a doctor." I went out and found one; he started coming toward Major B—— but he was still fifteen yards away when the Major held up his hand and stopped him. He wouldn't let him come any nearer, because the Jap snipers were so busy. They were sniping back and forth, and I still can't understand why they didn't get me, because I was out there. We had a hell of a lot of action that night. The Japs came out of their caves and holes. About 1 A.M. we got word that a Jap invasion force was coming and you can bet from one o'clock until dawn we were pretty tense. We lost about four men during the night. I figure there were about thirty of us on top of that hill.

When dawn came, it was very quiet. All the boys seemed a little quieter, even a little older. You knew right there what war was like. All that day I stood on the right flank, waiting for another company to drive the Japs out toward us. In the morning I opened my rations. I ate a chocolate bar. It tasted swell. I remember in the afternoon I asked another guy, "How many Japs here," and he said, "Oh, about two hundred, three hundred more." When night came, three of us were selected for guard duty. My job was to go up on top of the hill and watch out for trouble. Well, the top of the hill was a plain Jap cemetery. We must have piled up about fifty dead Japs up there during the day. So I went up there in the dark, up into that Jap graveyard. I picked my way through. I crawled about them. It began to rain. It was raining buckets before you knew it. I was up on this hill, with the dead Jap bodies around me, and I thought, "It doesn't take long to be dead. You're alive one minute and dead the next, just like a rock." It was nice to have the other two guys up there, at that. About midnight we hear a lot of firing. We look out toward the channel and we see a big sea battle going on.

I felt so tired I didn't give a damn any more. I hadn't slept the first night so I'd been up for more than thirty-six hours. The big battle was going on. I hope we get the best of it, I thought. I figure it lasted about ten minutes. I thought, well,

that's that, and I got down in position, down on my belly, my helmet over my head to keep the water off, but it was as though I were in a tub of water. I soaked there. When morning came I was soaked through. My hands were shriveled from the rain and the cold. It rained all morning long. Then, finally, I went down from the hill with the other boys, and we got our rations.

We must have looked pretty yellow when we came down from the hill, and the other boys could smell the death odor on us from the Japs we'd been with. "Jesus, you guys smell like hell," one of the guys told us. I asked about the sea battle. "I think we got the best of it," he said, "but it was pretty damn tough."

The three of us went down to the ocean to take a bath. We needed one bad. I piled all my clothes on the beach. When we went in, a lot of the other boys did, too. Maybe there were a hundred in all. I said to one of the boys who'd been up on the hill with me, "Did you ever think we'd be here today after all we've gone through," and somebody hollered, "Look out, a submarine!"

I turn around and I see, sure enough, a periscope coming toward us in the water, about 150 yards away. I picked up my clothes, and I beat it. I left a brand new towel and a pair of swell socks on the beach. I was running all naked, my feet getting all cut up with the coral and I was telling myself, "I'll be goddamned if I'm going to be shot by a submarine after going through all this!"

The sub was a Jap sub. Our guns went after him. He went down.

We bivouacked that night on the ground, near fox holes. We slept with our clothes on. I started to take off my shoes. Then I thought I'd better not. I had a hunch. Finally I said to myself, "Aw, what the hell, and took them off so I could stretch my toes. That hunch of mine was a good one. About five o'clock that morning an awful explosion woke us all up. We got the orders, "Grab your rifles and get into fox holes."

It was the submarine. She'd returned and was shelling us. I never put my shoes on so fast in my life. But the sub didn't do much damage and was driven away.

In all the excitement there was a little chicken running around that morning. "Oh-oh," says one guy, "I'm waiting for that to grow up. We could use some roast chicken." Nobody touched that little chick. We just let it run around, and then it got off into the brush and we didn't see it any more.

For a little while after that nothing very interesting happened. Then we got rumors we were going over to Guadalcanal. What the hell are we going to do there? I asked myself. We thought that island was pretty well taken care of. But one day in early September we get into a destroyer, 500 of us, and we go over. We make a surprise landing on the western end of the island and surprise 3,000 Japs. We'd been told there was only about 300 Japs there. Boy, it was a good thing that a convoy of transports was coming in that same morning, because when the Japs see it they took off for the hills, thinking a big operation was coming off. I'll never forget that day. If the Japs had remained, they would have wiped us all out. We landed, though, and then we took up positions way out in the boondocks because we had to protect Henderson airfield. It was pretty exciting there for a while. We made a hell of a raid on Tasimbogo *—that was about September 6 or so, I guess. Then we're surprised one day to see Major B—— return. He limped, but he was still the marvelous officer he'd always been. On September 12—I'll remember that date, too—I got thirty-five letters in one bunch from home. It made me feel wonderful to know everything was O.K. at home. I was finishing the last of the letters when Major B—— sent over a runner to get us all together for a meeting. We met in the camp area. He said, "There are 3,000 to 5,000 Japs about a mile away from you on the other side of the Lunga River. They're advancing on

* See story of Private James Gerard Hall, "I Live on Borrowed Time." Also story of Sergeant Francis William Marasciullo, "Mortar Master."

us and on the airfield. They may attack us any minute. We go into position immediately.”

We set to work. All night and morning we dug positions on the Lunga River, and that night the Japs struck. The Japs on the island were backed by Jap destroyers and cruisers in the sea. They threw everything at us. The Japs attacked and were driven back on a hill. The Japs took away two machine-gun nests from us. I was on the side of the hill. I could hear a swishing all around me. The Japs were about thirty yards away, setting up machine-guns. They were advancing on us and on the airport when Major B—— started a drive against them. It was like this. They took the machine-guns and then they all started to scream at the same time, hollering like madmen. Above all that hollering I heard a Marine yelling, “Get ’em as they come over the top!” They kept coming at us. We went back, slowly.

Then Major B—— gave us our offensive orders. “Pull all your men up on this hill.” We had five machine guns set there. “All right, boys,” he said, calmly, “stand by for a bayonet charge.” We waited there for a long time. You’d think it was hours but I guess it wasn’t more than twenty minutes. Then Major B—— said, “Advance!”

I went up a knoll slowly. There were seven or eight Marines up there. It was dark as hell. The Japs were coming up the hill at us and we threw grenades down at them. We were laying on our stomachs on the hill, throwing down grenades.

I heard someone of our boys suddenly yell, “Look out for that grenade!”

I rolled over once, thinking I’d gotten away from it, but instead I rolled right on top of it. Boy, it sure picked me up. I was lifted up into the air and saw a big red flash; then I came down and I was on my knees, and I started to scream, “Get me out of here!” My chest was burning like fire and my face was bleeding. I kept yelling, “Get me out of here!” just like that. I began to feel faint, but I just kept my teeth closed tight and said to myself, *don’t pass out now, not now*; yet there

wasn't anybody to come to me because there wasn't anybody there but me that high up. Then a couple of Marines crept up under the fire, picked me up, and laid me down on the side of the hill. We couldn't go any further. We were stuck there right in the cross-fire, with machine-gun fire between us and the Japs, and what with grenades and mortar shells dropping all around me I lay out there from 4 to 8 A.M. Boy, I never thought I'd see that morning sun again. I expected to be killed any minute. I kept hollering for a corps man. My face felt big as a house. I guess I passed out a couple of times, but I'd come to and fight with myself to stay conscious because I knew what the Japs do to the wounded. They just aren't human.

Once I came to and a Marine was holding my hand.

"Jesus," I said, "My face feels as though it was all blown to hell."

He said, "Sabatelli, how you feeling?"

"Pretty bad," I said, and then I passed out again.

When I came to, I saw another Marine lying near me. He was wounded, too. Maybe it was the same Marine, I don't remember. He said, "Sabatelli, how you feeling?" again, and I said, "Pretty bad," and he said, "Well, so long, Sabatelli," and I said, "So long," and I knew he knew he was going to die. He did die, too. I couldn't feel much, myself. I felt pretty numb. If I have to die, I thought, this isn't so bad.

Next thing I knew a U. S. fighter plane came over and strafed the Jap machine-guns and just strafed them out. Then the boys could rescue me and the Marines near me. I guess there were seven guys still alive.

When it was light, I saw a Jap with his arm blown off. He wasn't far from me. He was crying and moaning without a stop.

Then the corps men came for me. I heard one say, "We better take this guy, he looks like an awful mess." I could hear them, but I didn't feel like answering. When they finally picked me up in a stretcher, I broke into a hell of a good cry.

A corps man said to me, "Why, those yellow so-and-so's, they can't kill a good Marine."

"You're going to be all right, kid," the doctor said as he examined me. I cheated someone there, all right, by not dying. He told me that when the grenade blew up, the shrapnel wounds broke two main arteries in my legs and I almost bled to death.

They kept me in a field hospital for four days, bandaging my legs with Ace bandages. I got to New Zealand a week after. They were moving me from one ward to another, and as I got to the door I felt sort of warm down about my legs. I said, "I think I'm bleeding." They took the cover off me and found me swimming in blood. It was so bad that one of the corps men pressed both thumbs down on the arteries to shut off the blood and somebody called a doctor right out of an operating room so he could fix me up. They thought at first they'd have to amputate. But they didn't.

Those Japs got a lot of killing to do if they're going to kill a Marine.

ON THE BANKS OF THE MATANIKAU

The Story of

PVT. HENRY J. DEBOER, JR., U.S.M.C.



HANK DEBOER is twenty-one. He's a B.A.R. man—Browning Automatic Rifle—and Hank was one of the boys who used his B.A.R. with devastating accuracy in the Solomons. A machinist in New York before he joined the Marine Raiders, he won the Silver Star for killing "at least ten" Japs in the second Battle of the Matanikau.

We heard the Japs before we saw them. That was 11 P.M. of August 7, the first day we landed on Tulagi. Don Hunt, one of my closest buddies, heard them. We were on a roving patrol on the main ridge of the island and we had a twenty-yard beat to cover, back and forth. "Shhh!" went Don, suddenly, "Listen!" We stopped. You could hear them all right. "Listen to those bastards," Don whispered. "Keep your eyes peeled." Then we saw them. They were carrying machine guns and they were silhouetted against the sky about fifty feet away. "Here goes," said Don. There was a rasp as he pulled the cotter pin of a hand grenade and threw it over.

We heard it land. There was an excited flurry of voices, then a roar and a bright orange flash as the grenade exploded. The sand was still coming down when a Jap machine gun started to spit red tracers over our heads.

"Must be hundreds of 'em!" Don turned and made for the

camp. "C'mon, we gotta wake everybody up!" I ducked back with him and we gave the alarm.

In a couple of minutes they were all out and we formed a defensive line. Now we saw the Japs silhouetted clearly against the sky, and they were coming at us. They were in batches—three, five, ten—and we picked them off as they came. Some of them were yelling at us in English, "Die, dirty bastard Marine, die!"

We traded fire for nearly an hour, the Japs never getting any nearer, the fight dying down more and more, and finally they gave it up as a bad job and went back down the ridge. In the morning we went out on patrol again. We found what good work Don's grenade had done. A Japanese officer must have just about sat on that grenade while they were hunting for it, as far as we could figure it out. It blew his leg off and ripped open his stomach. But what got everyone standing around him was that his throat was slit. And on the ground near him was a razor. One of the fellows staring down on him said, "Cripes, he didn't have much choice, did he?"

We pushed along the ridge all that day. Four of us fellows stuck together pretty much in a sort of a clique. We'd hit it off right from the start, when we began our raiders' training on Island X in the Pacific, weeks before we hit the Solomons. There was Don Hunt, a thin guy with black curly hair, who always took the lead in everything, and Don W., a husky football star who was as handsome as a movie actor. Both had marvelous personalities, the kind of guys you like on sight, and Don W. had a wonderful talent for drawing. Then there was Tommy, a little Irish kid, about five feet five, who was always taking a lot of kidding on account of his size. We four hit it off swell. That afternoon we pushed along the ridge until it got to a place where it descended into a valley. This led to steep cliffs dotted with caves. Here we joined Company — who'd gotten the Japs pushed back into the caves. Some of these were natural caverns in the stone, others had been carved out by the Japs, and looked as if they'd been cut out with pick

and shovel. One of the biggest had sandbags barricading the entrance. Company — had a Marine interpreter, who knew Japanese. He was nicknamed "Tiger," because he was so damn small—125 pounds dripping wet, and the nerviest guy you ever saw. A few minutes after we got there we saw Tiger crawling up the side of the cliff, picking his way from boulder to boulder until he came to the cave entrance with sandbags. It took him about ten minutes to get up there.

Then he began shouting in Japanese.

Don Hunt punched me in the elbow. "He's probably telling them to surrender," he said.

Whatever it was, the Japs didn't go for it. The interpreter shouted again, and then stopped. A Jap voice came echoing out of the cave in unmistakable English:

"Go to hell, Marine!"

The interpreter looked back at us, waved his hand, and started down the cliff again. Demolition men went into action. We saw them move toward the cliff, one dragging a big tree limb and another guy running alongside attaching TNT blocks to it. The two got to the bottom of the cliff and waited until other demolition men, carrying boxes and more TNT, joined them. They got behind the limb and pushed it up the cliff in front of them. Meanwhile, the interpreter was scrambling down as fast as he could. He got to the bottom just as the demolition boys reached the mouth of the cave. "We're going to see some excitement," someone said behind me. The demolition men stood at one side of the cave entrance and seemed to be talking something over for a minute. Then they picked up the limb, tossed it into the cave with one heave, and raced down the cliff a mile a minute. About ten seconds passed. Then there was a terrible roar. The entire mouth of the cave collapsed. There was dust and sand and rock all mixed up. The Japs were sealed up for good.

The job of mopping up Tulagi went on for three weeks. It was a hell of a job. It meant blasting them out of caves, shooting them out of trees, chasing them across ridges, and sitting

up, with one eye open all night, waiting for their snipers to kick up trouble. We had one meal a day for fourteen days in a row, and that was a can of hash or a chocolate bar. We found Jap rice, too, and though it was wormy we ate that. About three days before we left Tulagi for Guadalcanal, we were ordered to make a short raid on Florida Island. That's only about half a mile away. Some of the Japs escaped from Tulagi at night and swam over, we were told. They were hiding out in the native villages on Florida Island. We were to go over there and clean them out.

We went over in Higgins boats. It was only a couple of hours' work. We hit the beach in the morning and went right in, past thick tropical woods chock full of some of the most beautiful birds you ever saw. It was a real paradise. We pushed through the brush and ran smack into a village. The Japs heard us coming because, as we infiltrated, we saw seven Japs dart out of a big hut and head for the Jungle. There was a short skirmish and when it was over the seven Japs were dead. They were dressed in rags, and two of them didn't have shoes but had more rags wrapped about their feet. By this time we all had the same feeling about Japs. We just wanted to kill them. It made us see red when we saw them. They were like a bunch of wolves attacking sheep; they weren't anything human, as far as we were concerned. Every time I pumped a bullet into a Jap, I had the feeling I was getting rid of something unclean. Coming back from the Florida raid, a Marine told us about a buddy of his, a kid about eighteen, who tried to help a wounded Nip officer get to his feet inside one of those caves. The Nip shoved a hand grenade into the kid's stomach and both of them were blown up.

A couple of days later we got into the Higgins boats again and shoved off for Guadalcanal. That was about September 1. Most of us were tired as hell. We went on to the 'canal and marched to a bivouac area. We dug fox holes and tried to eat. The Japs wouldn't let us catch up on sleep. They kept up air raids and submarine shelling. About the third of September, we

got another order: we were to go to Savo island. This was a tiny deserted island between us and Tulagi. One of our air patrol pilots thought he spotted tents from the air. We had to check up on it.

Again we shoved off in Higgins boats. We patrolled the place but didn't find anything. We returned the same day.

Back on Guadalcanal, a new order—to raid Tasimbogo, a big village taken over by the Japs. According to the scuttlebutt, Tasimbogo was full of Japs, but only one in ten was armed.

We left for Tasimbogo on the tenth on converted Tuna boats. We didn't sleep that night because the decks were awash, it rained, and we were soaking wet and cold. We cleaned the place up fast * and returned the evening of the eleventh. At Tasimbogo one Marine—Corporal Peon—certainly showed the stuff Marines are made of. A piece of a Jap .75 hit him in the right arm, nearly severing it from the shoulder. Two corps men—Pharmacist's Mate Alfred W. Cleveland and Pharmacist's Mate, second class, Karl B. Coleman—started to amputate it with a scalpel. The scalpel wasn't sharp enough. They had to use a hunting knife. Peon kidded them while they worked on him. "I'll get my survey † now, you guys," he said. He said they didn't hurt him but he puffed cigarette after cigarette. And all that time the Jap .75's were throwing shells around. He was a real Marine and Cleveland got a citation for the job he did there under fire.

We didn't sleep the night of the eleventh, coming back from Tasimbogo. On the twelfth we prepared positions for the Battle of Raiders' Ridge, Bloody Ridge, Grassy Knoll, or whatever the hell they call it now. The night of the twelfth we didn't sleep: we stood a twelve-hour watch expecting the Nips over any minute. The morning of the thirteenth my outfit went out on patrol while the rest of the boys stayed there

* See "I Live On Borrowed Time," and "Mortar Master," for details of this raid.

† Survey: naval term for a complete medical checkup which means, of course, being taken out of action and into a hospital.

digging and preparing positions. That night the Japs hit us. That was one hell of a fight.

That first night was a nightmare. B Company caught hell. We met the Japs head on. Their screaming was enough to drive a man mad. It was half-human, half-animal. And they never stopped coming over. We cut them down wholesale. Their dead piled high along the ridge. One of our machine gunners had to move his position. "Too damn many dead Nips in front of me," he complained. I was too busy firing my B.A.R. to think about anything but killing Japs. I was firing at anything from a gun flash to a shadow. Toward dawn of the fourteenth, the firing died down. We took a little break.

Then, about 7 A.M. we were ordered to encircle the Japs out in the boondocks and push them toward the ridge, where our men would cut them down. We crawled down there. We smoked them out.

The rest of that day was wait, wait, wait. And that was worse than fighting. Just before the second night's battle we were moved off the ridge down into the boondocks again. We stood by all night long while the battle raged on top of the ridge and alongside of us. Shells from our .75's and .105 howitzers back at Henderson Field whistled over us. They were so low we could hear them brushing the leaves off the tops of the trees. We hadn't slept for four nights. This made five. And still we couldn't sleep. We kept standing by. At daybreak of the fifteenth we were relieved at last by an outfit from the beach defenses, a couple of miles away. We shoved off to the beach to take over.

For the next ten days we rested there. We were too damn tired to bitch about anything after five days and five nights without sleep. We were placed in the reserve-reserve class—every other outfit on the island was to be used in action before they came around to us again—and we killed time for those ten days. I just lay around, and slept, and ate, and swam, and stood guard when I had to. We sure used that rest.

About dawn of the twenty-fifth of September—it was raining

buckets—word was passed along. "Line up, Major Walt wants to see us." We saw Maj. W. L. Walt, who was once our company commander, and had been transferred to another outfit, standing under a tree with a lot of the men around him. We walked over there. Major Walt is a big man, about six feet two, and he was dressed in dungarees like the rest of us. He was dripping wet. The rain was rolling off his face. His shirt stuck to his body.

First thing he said was, "At ease, men. Gather around." We moved in. "I know you men have done more than your share," he said. "But back there—" He pointed in the direction of the Matanikau river, about a mile behind us. "Back there are about thirty Nips. This company was once my company. I think a lot of it. I want you to go in there and clean them out. As a favor to me."

He told us the Nips had infiltrated through the Marines' lines. They'd been fighting there for two days and two nights.

"Will you do that for me?" he asked. We all nodded and there were a lot of "Sure, Major's" and "O.K., Major's." He smiled with a "I knew-you-would-do-it," expression and walked away.

We went back to our fox holes, picked up our rifles and ammunition belts and started out. The scuttlebutt had it that this was our last battle and that we were going to pull out after it. That made us feel good. Going up to the Matanikau was tough. The rain never let up. It wasn't a warm, tropical rain, but cold and chilling. Every time we brushed against a branch, a shower of cold rain slapped us in the face. We had gotten about twenty-five yards from the banks of the Matanikau when we first met Jap resistance. After a flurry of machine-gun and rifle fire, the order came along the line: "Move down to the beach and encircle them." We finally got a clear picture of what was happening. During the last two days and nights, the Nips had fought their way across the shallow river and had broken through our lines. Our order was to crawl down to the ocean edge and make a wide circle around the Japs, and trap them.

We got between them and the river. The ocean was on their right; the jungle was on their left; we were in front of them; and the rest of the Marines were behind them. The only way they could escape was to charge through us, hit the river, and cross it. To prevent that, and also to prevent the rest of the Japs coming across the river to join them, we spent the rest of that day stringing barbed wire along the river bank.

At 8 P.M. the trapped Japs did charge. They laid down a smoke screen and came screaming with that awful screaming that turns your stomach inside out and chills your blood. Their light machine guns raked us. They cut down thirteen of our men. They seemed to far outnumber us. I was right in the middle of the whole thing. I spotted Corp. Leonard Dalano, my squad leader, firing away behind a log. He was at the edge of a small clearing. I crawled over to him to find out what the score was. I was talking to him when a Jap bore down on us. We both fired. My B.A.R. jammed, but the Jap fell dead—right in front of Dalano's rifle. I jumped behind a tree stump to free my rifle. By this time a mad rush was on. The Marines who saw themselves cut off by the Jap charge, dashed down to the beach to rejoin the main company. Dalano leaped up and yelled, "Come on to the beach!" and he skirted the edge of the clearing and vanished into the jungle.

It was my tough luck that I didn't hear what he said. I only learned that later. When I finally started to move, the Nips stopped me in my tracks. They must have known there were only a handful of us around there and that we were cut off from the rest of our outfit. They came over yelling as only the Nips can yell. I guess for a while I forgot I was civilized. Everything I had inside of me—the rain, the heat, the dirt, the killing, the hatred, Don's death—it all came up at once. I began screaming myself. I yelled to a machine gun on my right to open up. When it didn't, I looked around. *It wasn't there.* That made me plain crazy. I was sure a machine gun had been there. Now I thought everybody had run out on me.

I yelled at the Japs with all my might. I stuck the stock of my B.A.R. into the sand and jumped on it and kicked it so hard I freed it. I picked it up and started firing. I cursed the Nips in every way I knew how. I was firing as fast as I could feed it. I wanted to kill the whole Jap army. And it seemed every time I cursed them they charged. I killed them as they came at me. I killed them and kept on killing them and they kept on coming over, piling up in front of me. And after a while they didn't charge any more.

Somehow I came out of it alive. After a while—I don't know how long but it must have been around midnight—I heard Sgt. Red Hills call out, "Is that you, Hank?" "Yeah, is that you, Red?" I yelled back. "Anybody else with you?" I saw him now. He was only a few yards away and with him were three Marines. We moved back to the beach and joined our outfit.

There were many heroes that night. There was a young wounded Marine lying there who was slashed across the shoulder by a Jap officer. He grabbed the Nip's leg, pulled him down, and strangled him. There was another Marine who'd been shot through the head. When a corps man came to help him, he said, "G'wan, get back there and pick up the wounded." And there was a Marine, a big guy from Pennsylvania, who'd been a coal miner, who went around insisting that God was at his side, right beside him, and tripping him, that night. He'd lost his rifle and was running from a Jap with a rifle and he tripped and fell down. Just as he fell he heard the snap of the Jap's rifle and the bullet whizzed over him. He got up and started to run again. He took three steps and tripped and fell again. Just as he tripped, he heard that Jap's rifle and again a bullet whizzed over him. Four times he got up and four times he tripped and each time it was a half-second before the Jap fired at him. A minute later the Jap was killed. That Marine is convinced God was right at his side tripping him. . . .

Back on the beach, I saw Lieutenant McLaughlin, a nice guy, talking to our Captain. The Captain was saying, "I'll send a half-

track * up there to wipe out the rest of the Nips." A Marine interrupted, "But Captain, some of our own wounded are there."

"All right," said the Captain, "Mac, you go up, look over the machine guns there and check the wounded."

Mac turned and saw me.

"Hank," he said, "want to go up there again with me?"

I said, "Sure, sir." And so Mac, Sergeant Hills, Corporal Tracy and I hit the trail that skirted the beach. We went up there, listened in the darkness, and decided it would be better to wait until dawn. At daylight we went up again. We walked about one hundred yards and we came to the spot where I'd knocked off my Japs. The ground looked as though it had been dug up for a garden. The trees were splintered white. Leaves and branches covered the ground. Rifles, machine guns, packs, ponchos, all kinds of gear, were tossed about. And there were the bodies, bodies of our own men and bodies of the Japs. The Nips I'd killed were heaped in an area about ten yards square.

"Jesus!" Hills said. "Look at the mess of them. You must have got about fifty or sixty of them."

We walked around and my heart skipped a beat when I saw one Marine lying dead. It was Tommy. I bent over him. He'd been killed by a machine-gun burst—Tommy, the kid we never thought would get it. I heard a moan. A wounded Marine, covered with blood and sand, was trying to climb up over the edge of a fox hole about ten feet away. "Get me help," he gasped. "I've been bleeding all night. I'm dying—"

I gave him some water from my canteen. "Doc's on his way," I said. "He'll be here in a minute." I was bending down talking to him.

Mac, who was working with Hills on a machine gun they'd found, suddenly yelled, "Hank! Get that guy over there!" I whirled around. There was a Jap getting up and starting to

* Half-track: half-truck, half-tractor, upon which is mounted a .75 Howitzer.

run. I grabbed my B.A.R. and tried to fire it, but it was jammed with sand. Mac let go with a couple of bursts from his Reising. The Jap spun around, riddled. The kid who was bleeding kept on moaning under his breath. I sat down there and began taking my B.A.R. apart to get it in working order. That rifle was damn important to me. "Grab that machine gun," Mac yelled, and he pointed to one set up on the edge of another fox hole. I threw away my rifle and started toward it. On the way I saw an '03.* I picked it up. I worked the bolt to see if it would fire. It seemed O.K. Everywhere I looked now I saw bodies of Marines. They were fellows I'd known and talked to and eaten chow with.

The bullets were flying all around. The Nips had a general idea of where we were and were trying to make the best of it. I saw Mac. He'd fixed the machine gun and was opening up on them. I made a run for the one I picked out, got there, and went to work. Then Hills ran to another gun and the three of us sprayed the bank of the Matanikau. We heard the half-track pull up behind us. The .75 opened up with a roar. Between our guns and the field piece we just about tore that river bank apart.

We were in it about half an hour when Mac ordered, "Cease firing." We picked up our gear and moved back to our outfit. They were laying around drinking coffee. I was dog-tired. I flopped down. It was the first time I got a really good look at the guys. They were gaunt, with black smudges under their eyes. They needed sleep. Their faces were covered with beard. Their blouses were torn, their dungarees messed up, and they ate slowly and with an effort, as though it was hard work just to open their mouths and swallow. They looked like a bunch of guys who had gone to hell to fight the devil and come back again. And there were a lot of familiar faces missing.

"Who'd you see up there, Hank? Did you see Joe? Bill?" I nodded.

He asked, "They both dead?"

*.30 caliber Springfield rifle, 1903 model.

I said, "Yeah."

Then some one said, "Anybody else?" I named thirteen Marines.

Don Hunt came out from nowhere and rumbled my hair.

"Why don't you go and get a cup of coffee, Hank?" I got up and went away. It was only when I was drinking my coffee that I realized how close I'd come to getting it. My hands began to shake, and I felt as though I wouldn't be able to keep the coffee down. I kept thinking of Tommy. We never figured he'd get it. After the first few days of action Don Hunt and I hadn't seen too much of him, but he was the sort of a guy you always felt close to even if you saw him only once a year. Besides, he was so small, the Nips couldn't see him to hit him, we'd told him when we horsed around at Quantico. "You'll go home in one piece, runt," we told him. I remembered how we tossed him about in roughhouse games during training. There was a lump in my throat so big I couldn't swallow my coffee. It hurt too much.

Mac came over. Don Hunt was with him.

"We've got to go back to the Matanikau and wait for relief."

We got up and went back. The Jap bodies were scattered all over. It was the bloodiest place I've ever seen. In a couple of hours the smell of the dead hung over the place like a fog. Big blue flies settled on the bodies. In the midst of this we ate what chow we had. After we ate it, we flopped down again. I didn't care about anything. We just lay there nearly as dead as the Japs.

In the afternoon they brought up Jap prisoners, and the Nips set to work removing the remains of their army. We set off a big charge to blow a hole wide and deep enough to bury all the Jap dead. Then we filled it up with dead Nips. Other Marines came up to remove the bodies of our dead. Toward evening we left for our bivouac area down on the beach. This was a quiet coconut grove.

About all that saved us, I think, was our sense of humor.

Every night we'd sit around and tell stories. We talked about anything but the war. Our favorite subjects were embarrassing moments we'd ever had; what lousy teachers we had at school; girls we'd gone out with; and food. Food was awfully important. We tortured ourselves about food. We all had the same idea. We'd sit around and somebody would begin:

"First, we'll go to a big hotel. Then we'll order a—"

Everybody would break in with, "A steak with French Fried..."

Each of us would fill in something. One guy would pipe up with "Remember, plenty of mashed potatoes," and another, "Don't forget coffee with cream and cigars," and so on. Somebody suggested we buy a tin of canned beef and put it on the middle of the table at this wonderful feast and yell at it after every course, "Rot, you son of a bitch, rot, you no-good bastard..."

Before we left, finally, I got myself a nice case of boils. They were killing me when the word finally came, "Pack your gear, we're shoving off tomorrow." I'd lost about twenty-five pounds. All that night we couldn't sleep. The scuttlebutt was traveling around. We were all beating our chops about going back to the States. That was the main subject. We talked about it all night—how our folks would welcome us, how our girls would welcome us, how it would feel to walk down the street and drop into the corner drug store and talk to the folks we knew. When the sun came up, we shoved off.

Good old Don Hunt was with me. The two of us were lucky guys. We came through all right. I remember saying to him, "You know, there's one thing I want more than anything else."

"What's that, Hank?" he said.

"A toothbrush," I said. I think I could have forgotten my boils, could have forgotten everything if I had a toothbrush and toothpaste, clean smelling and sweet and healthy-feeling, and if I could have brushed and brushed my teeth.

JAP-BLASTER

The Story of

CAPT. HARRY TORGERSON, U.S.M.C.



CAPTAIN TORGERSON, now Major, is a fighter and the son of a fighter. His father was decorated for bravery in the Boxer Rebellion. A huge man, six foot three, Captain Torgerson was an outstanding football hero at New York University. He was a reserve officer when war broke out. At his own request he was transferred to the Paramarines. During the Solomon Islands action, in which Paramarines were used as Marine Raiders, he became famous for the exploit—now Marine history—which he describes here.

I was in one of the last landing barges to hit the beach of Gavutu Island. We were halfway in when the Jap machine guns got their range. Bullets slapped the water and whined as they ricocheted off the barge. Some of us ducked; some of us fell to the floor; and all of us prayed. One of my best friends, a captain, was killed at my side. One moment we were exchanging notes, the next he had fallen, badly wounded, shot through the throat. He was a brave man and never uttered a complaint.

Then, suddenly, we were on the beach, water squished in our boots, and we were running pell-mell for the jungle. I'm big, and it didn't take long for the Nips to pick me out. I had just gained the shelter of the first trees when my hand was jerked back. I looked at it curiously as I ran, keeping low. A sniper's bullet had skimmed along my wrist, leaving a thin, red line, and ripped out the entire works of my wrist watch.

It was the damndest thing, after that, to find myself glancing at that empty frame all day.

We fought for the jungle inch by inch as the sun rose and crossed the sky. The Japs contested every step with devilish ingenuity and endless persistence. By late afternoon, we pushed them back to a hill and, as we advanced on the hill, forced them into caves which honeycombed the knoll. They were curious caves, almost like Times Square subway stations, for you could go in by one entrance and find yourself emerging out of the side of the hill fifty yards away.

Night came quickly. By then the Japs were securely entrenched in their caves. They poured out a continuous, withering hail of lead, and in the night their murderous tracers crisscrossed the darkness ceaselessly. To add to the horror, they sent out squads of snipers, more like animals than men, for they were dressed in the skins of monkeys. They clambered up trees and with their long-barreled snipers' rifles took a deadly toll of our men that night.

To be sniped at during the day is bad. At night, it takes on the dimensions of a wild dream. Your nerves become raw. The rustling sound of a leaf or a blade of grass is enough to bring you up, sharp. And the war of nerves is racking: you have the feeling that a Japanese is training his rifle on you, from some unseen vantage point, and slowly squeezing the trigger.

That was our first day and night on Gavutu Island.

Sunrise brought release. We went after the snipers. It was good hunting. They tumbled out of their perches in the trees like so many animals. But the Japs in their caves were another matter. By eleven o'clock that morning we realized that we could never conquer Gavutu unless they were wiped out.

My officer, quiet and efficient, came to us.

"We've got to do something about those caves," he said.

"Why not TNT?" I suggested.

He nodded. "Go ahead, Captain, and see what you can do," he said, and I got his last words over the chatter of machine guns, the staccato bark of rifle fire.

I gathered three sergeants—Kelly, Simming, and Cox—and we walked over to a small bungalow-type house that had once been a Jap store. We sat down inside on what was left of the furniture, which probably had once been used by an officer.

"We've decided something's got to be done about those caves," I began. "They've got to be wiped out, or we just stay here." The sergeants looked at me, then looked at each other and agreed.

"I'm going to ask the Navy for TNT," I said. "Want to come along?"

The men grinned. I needn't have asked the question. You couldn't have stopped them if you wanted to. We immediately radioed one of our ships asking for twenty cases of TNT "in a hurry."

I must give the Navy all credit. They worked incredibly fast. In a short time they had the twenty cases on the beach and our men were ripping them open.

I stuffed as many TNT blocks in my pockets as I could. Some persons have the idea that TNT is shaped like a stick of dynamite. That is wrong. The TNT comes in half-pound blocks, wrapped in bright yellow paper, with a number eight cap attached as a fuse. In other words, they are more like big Fourth of July firecrackers than anything else.

I had a hunch that I would have to have other material, perhaps planks. We found a small empty shack and proceeded to tear that down for the lumber. Loaded down with the planks and TNT, we crawled through the underbrush until we reached one of our companies at the base of the hill pocketed with Jap-held caves.

Here we began our strategy.

I got hold of a machine-gun sergeant.

"We're going up the hill with this stuff," I said. "Keep a steady fire on the caves. You've got to drive those Japs back inside."

He carried out his orders well. Under a virtual umbrella

of fire, we crawled up the hill, pushing the planks before us on the slippery grass.

We must have made an unusual picture, and the Japs may have surmised what we were about. At any rate, they tried to rake us with machine-gun fire but could not get near enough the entrance of their caves to fire accurately. The fire behind us was effective.

My idea was to use the planks as javelins, with the TNT attached. It could be thrown directly forward, as a spear might be thrown. Thus, I could be sure that plank and explosive would go directly into the cave; that the TNT would not bounce off; that it could not be picked up and thrown back at us.

We came to the first cave near the base of the hill. I tied some of the TNT blocks to the end of a board. I grabbed the end of the board, lit the fuse, and heaved the plank into the cave.

Then we hit the dirt.

There was a roar like a steam-boiler explosion. And that was that.

Before the day was out, we had cleaned up eighteen caves. How many Japs were in each I shall never know, but it was estimated that 1,200 Japanese infested Gavutu and its sister island, Tanambogo.

A number of times the Japanese risked their lives to take pot shots at us. But they invariably missed. The steady fire from the men at the base of the hill kept them holed up most of the time, like beavers in their caves.

It started to rain, and a steady drizzle filled the air. Each time we hit the dirt, after hurling out TNT, we came up full of mud. Toward the end of the day, I found I had eleven blocks left and the last cave to clean up. I decided to let them have it all. We tied the TNT blocks together and tossed the whole business in.

It was terrific. It was the daddy of all explosions.

I'd hit the dirt as fast as I could, and so had my men, but

when we picked ourselves up, our ears rang and we were slightly dizzy. The hill that met our eyes then was a shambles. It was a heap of boulders and rocks, with all entrances tightly sealed. If the blast of the TNT did not immediately kill every Jap inside, the concussion within those narrow corridors must have caused fearful havoc.

Tanambogo was our next assignment. This island was a sore spot but we wiped the Japs out there. They even used an old dodge on us—hoisting the white flag. But we knew that one by heart, and when it did not work, we were not surprised to see them pull it down and break out the Rising Sun.

The Marines did a good job on Tanambogo. There were fast hand-to-hand battles, snipers were knocked down from their perches and we finally raised the Stars and Stripes over the island.

In Guadalcanal I joined the Raiders—hard-hitting fighters. It was like an old-fashioned slugging match the day I arrived. No front line, no rear, but the Japs infiltrated all about and dog fights everywhere.

The biggest fight on the 'canal was the Battle of Lunga Ridge—Bloody Hill. It is called Raiders' Ridge now, in honor of Edson's Raiders (Colonel Merritt Edson) who brought undying glory to themselves there. Raiders' Ridge was a highly important objective to the Japs. This is because of its proximity to Henderson Field, directly to the north. With this airfield you control the island. The airfield itself was virtually little more than a piece of land chewed out of coconut groves and flattened by steam rollers and the feet of Jap labor battalions. Dirt roads led to the crest of the ridge, and these were used as avenues for movements of supplies. To the east is the Tenaru River and on the other side the Lunga River.

Before the Japs attacked, we pursued a rather curious course. We proceeded to mow down the high grass in front of the ridge with artillery and grenade fire. The Japs, being short,

would have had excellent cover running through the high grass, and if they attacked at night—their favorite battle time—they would be even more difficult to see.

The attack began just after dusk. The Japs kept coming over in frontal waves. Their plan seemed to be attack, and keep attacking, and never mind the losses.

First they threw over huge calcium flares, which turned night into day. Then mortar shells, machine-gun shells, and rifle fire as accompaniments. Then came the Japs themselves—chanting as they marched, "*Banzai! Banzai!*" It was a weird sight as they came through the garish light of the calcium flares, for all the world like little boys in Halloween costume.

They came on and on. They never stopped. The bodies piled up in heaps. When they broke through, bloody hand-to-hand battle ensued. The Marines were on that ridge, and they weren't going to give it up. It was a night of slaughter.

There is one picture that I shall never forget. A huge Marine was resting for a moment when a Jap, who had infiltrated quietly to our front lines, leaped on him and started to jab him with a bayonet. I saw the Marine in the calcium flare, etched in that eerie light, wringing the Jap's neck like a rag doll.

When I think of it, I realize how symbolic it was.

From the official Marine report of Colonel Merritt Edson:

"On the night of September 13, after they were forced to withdraw from the left of the main line of resistance, this battalion was reorganized under the command of Captain Harry Torgerson. It was ordered by Colonel Merritt Edson to extend our position to the left and to straighten the line held by the battalion reserve. This counterattack was successfully carried out in that the enemy was forced to withdraw into the edge of the woods and a flanking movement by the enemy was completely stopped. During this engagement the company's casualties were about 40 per cent...."

ACROSS THE CAUSEWAY

The Story of

PVT. WILLIAM J. BAUMGARTEN, U.S.M.C.



PRIVATE BILL BAUMGARTEN is *twenty-two and a Paramarine, whose home town is in New Jersey.* "I left school to join the Paramarines," he says. "I wanted action and that was the outfit to give it to me." The action he got here was on land, and when he tells of it, his serious, dark eyes reflect some of the horror he saw.

The most awful ten minutes of my life were the ten minutes I spent in a Higgins boat caught on a coral reef a hundred yards off the island of Gavutu at noon of August 7. On either side of us the landing boats were speeding and bouncing toward the beach. We alone were stuck. We hung there, living targets caught in the center of murderous cross-fire from Jap machine guns set up along the beach. Bullets drilled into our boat like riveting hammers. Men were struck down on all sides of me. I crouched below the gunwale. The sailors struggled frantically to get the boat off the reef.

Above the sound of the bullets spattering came a sharp order. "Over the side—swim for it!"

I was carrying about two hundred pounds. That included belts of ammunition, rifle and pack. I slid over the gunwale. The water was warm. I sank down—down like a stone. By treading water and fighting, I managed to struggle to the surface and struck out heavily for the shore. Jap bullets peppered the water all around me. I swam blindly toward the shore, my eyes smarting from the salt water, the small of my back aching with the pack

I carried. Finally my hands scraped against sand-papery coral: I'd reached the shore.

I crawled out of the water, my fingers clutching deep into the watery sand, and flopped behind some boulders on the beach. The beach was cluttered with them. I lay there, gasping. My arms and legs felt like lead. I could make out other men crawling out of the sea, taking refuge behind the nearest stones.

The Japs weren't visible, but their guns were busy. They threw a steady barrage of lead at the Higgins boats zigzagging in, at the Marines hopping out and streaking for a place to hide.

In the center of the beach was a little shanty about ten feet high. Some of our Marines were already in it. It was a water shanty used by the Japs before they got away. Scattered along the beach were piles of fiber mattresses, each mattress about five by two feet. They looked odd there.

Our Navy dive bombers came on the scene. They dove down and strafed the beach—then let their eggs drop. The whole island seemed to leap from its foundations as those big babies hit. In the dawn bombing raid, all the Jap planes had been blasted before they could leave the water. The remains of nine Zeros, equipped with floats, and five patrol planes were strewn along the beach. We certainly seemed to have the situation in hand now, and slowly, from boulder to boulder, we moved up the beach. It was like a kid's game of hide-and-seek. Gavutu, after all, is only 600 by 400 yards. It's a mess of rocky little hills, stunted trees, jungle and bad lands, and it's connected with its sister island, Tanambogo, by a coral causeway, a sort of bridge made of rock about 15 feet wide and 300 feet long.

By midafternoon we'd established our beachhead. The Japs suddenly retreated across the causeway to Tanambogo, where they were barracked. We tried to pick them off as they retreated.

By four o'clock we had Gavutu.

Now we had to clean out the snipers. They were bad medicine. They had holed themselves up in caves in the hills.

Under orders, we advanced toward the hills and as we came near I discovered the Marines were doing a job and doing it well. They were dragging those mattresses I'd seen to the mouth of the caves, setting them afire, and then tossing them inside with their bayonets, like a farmer tossing a pitchfork-full of hay into the hayloft.

Captain —— shouted:

"Grab some more of those mattresses and smoke them out!"

We set to work. We tossed them in, smoking, and then ran back from the entrance. The smoke billowed up and out, yellowish, choking, and thick as hell.

We waited. Then the Japs came stumbling out. We shot them down one after another. They were snipers and they'd have given it to us sooner or later. Sometimes smoking the Nips out didn't work. We had to go in after them. In one cave we found that three or four Japs had committed hara-kiri. They'd fallen on their knives rather than surrender to us. We learned afterward that the Jap officers had warned their men that if they surrendered to the Marines they'd be tortured fiendishly—and then executed anyway.

The real hell began when night came. The Japs swarmed out of the remaining caves, climbed trees, and sniped at us. We couldn't talk, we couldn't whisper. We could scarcely breathe. Every move we made was followed by a flash of gunfire. At 8 P.M. they suddenly opened up with machine-gun and heavy mortar fire from Tanambogo. They kept that up all night. You saw the flashes of the guns, the patterns traced by the tracers.

We sent six boatloads of Marines across the channel to Tanambogo in an attempt to wipe them out. It wasn't too successful. The Japs hit them hard with everything they had. I understand only three of our boats were able to land and that the Japs were too well entrenched and we had to give up the attempt until daybreak. We didn't learn of what had happened until one of our outposts gave the alarm. Dim shapes were seen staggering up from the beach. Our boys didn't know they were

Marines until the fellows were almost on top of them. They could hardly walk for weariness after their skirmish with the Japs. After that we rearranged our cossack posts (listening posts). The only way to be sure of rest was to group ourselves in fours, and while two men stood watch, the other two slept. Then the watchers slept and the sleepers watched.

The Japs didn't let up the following day. We traded bullet for bullet. Our dive bombers slammed hell out of them. But no go. The only way to drive the Japs out of Tanambogo was to do it personally—to go over there and do it in hand-to-hand fighting. We had to go over that causeway.

I'll never forget looking at that thin bridge and thinking, boy, it sure looks wicked. I wondered how long it would take us to get across. I didn't learn that until the morning of the fourth day, when we crossed it.

We started to go over at 6:30 A.M. Most of us were so weary from lack of sleep from the sniping at night—it just about drove you out of your mind—that it wasn't any picnic when the Japs met us with machine-gun and mortar fire. We fought foot for foot for that bridge. I was in a group of men and we were about one-fourth of the way across when a Marine about two feet in front of me got it. He slumped over. I jumped to grab him. "Where'd they get you?" I asked him. I don't remember whether he answered me or whether at that moment I just didn't hear. Because three mortar shells came over, about twenty feet apart. I saw them. Then I felt as if someone had grabbed my arm and given it a sharp twist, almost tearing it off.

Shrapnel tore through the bicep part of my right arm, ripping the muscle away from elbow to shoulder. I could only think, "I've been hit!" Next thing I knew, corps men were helping me and the fellow in front of me back to the beach at Gavutu.

The Marines did cross that causeway. They did wipe out the Japs on Tanambogo. I saw none of this, but several fellows in my company told me the story later. Our boys fought across

the causeway to the beach at Tanambogo; not far away stood three Japanese barracks. The Marines were preparing to rush the barracks when the doors were flung open and out came the Japs. Our Marines outflanked them and wiped them out in short order.

The rest was uneventful. Together with about a dozen wounded fellows, I was taken to a first-aid station, patched up a bit, and then taken down to the Higgins boats to be removed across the channel to Tulagi. We were helped into the boats and the Jap machine-gun fire from Tanambogo raked us from stem to stern. For twenty minutes they raised hell. We lay there unable to get off that beach. All we could do was pray.

Finally, there was a lull. We took advantage of it and shoved off. We crossed to Tulagi, and then, with others, I was evacuated.

FIFTY-ONE DAYS ON GUADALCANAL

The Story of

FIRST LIEUT. JAMES THOMAS CONAWAY, U.S.M.C.



LIEUTENANT CONAWAY, *twenty-four, married, and father of one child, was a senior in the University of West Virginia—his home is Fairmont, West Virginia—when Pearl Harbor came. He enlisted, attended officers' training school in Quantico, Virginia, and was commissioned a second lieutenant Nov. 1, 1942.*

To deal with the Japs, pull no punches, use every trick, and forget you're civilized. We began absorbing that strategy of modern warfare the moment we landed on a South Pacific island, similar in climate and terrain to Guadalcanal, on which we trained for three months so arduously, so conscientiously, that we were ready to drop. We lived in tents under conditions simulating those of the 'canal, and we did not play make-believe. It was tough, and hard, and real.

We learned how to advance on machine-gun nests concealed in high grass. We became skilled in the arts of the serpent, man's first, implacable enemy. We crept on our bellies, pulling ourselves along with our elbows, wriggling the remainder of our bodies limply behind, taking advantage of every hill and knoll. We learned how to work alone, and trained until we could work as well alone as in a unit. Our officers missed no bets.

That South Pacific climate was a far cry from the romantic

rhapsodies you hear in the travelogues. It was a sweating stew of heat and rain, rain and heat, insects, mud, and fevers. Once rain fell continuously for five days and five nights. We lived in a world of mud and foul-smelling green mold. The mold grew upon everything in our tents. Our clothes were moldy. Our shoes were covered with it. We sank in mud nearly to our knees each time we dared move outside. But it was this training, this struggle against mud and mosquitoes and weather, that prepared us for Guadalcanal.

Some time in September I heard the scuttlebutt that our regiment was leaving, probably for combat action. Some of the fellows insisted we were to return to the States. We were still arguing pro and con when the order came to load ships. We worked all of one day at the job. By nightfall we were aboard transports and on our way—destination unknown. One morning I was sitting in my stateroom, cleaning my pistol. There was a knock on the door. "Come in," I said. It was Captain M——, one of the most capable officers I've ever known.

He hadn't come to pass the time of day. "I'd like to see you in my room at once," he said, turned on his heel, and left.

That sounded like business. When I walked into his stateroom a few moments later, I found my roommate, Lawrence Harris, of Charlotteville, West Virginia, and the three others of our company there. Captain M—— had visited each in turn. This *was* something.

"It must be damn important," Larry commented. "If he's taken all that trouble."

We agreed that the secret of our destination was probably out and that Captain M—— had himself learned it only a few minutes before. He walked in then.

"You're going to the relief of the Marine forces which are now being strongly attacked on Guadalcanal," he told us without any further ado. He gave us our specific orders. "When we reach Guadalcanal," he said, "I don't know whether we'll find friend or foe waiting for us on the beach. Now go ahead—you have your orders."

Outside his door, Larry rubbed his ear reflectively.

"Well, Jim," he said, "I guess we're going to see what we've been waiting for." I nodded. We'd see, all right. I think we all felt relieved. We were glad to know where we were headed. I gave the news to the boys, and you felt the surge of expectation and readiness to go out there and give everything they had. We wanted to meet the enemy.

We proceeded toward Guadalcanal. We were within a hundred miles of the island when reports came of a huge Japanese task force. Our force was a small one, comparatively. We followed a strategic pattern, part of which was to sail in the opposite direction for a certain length of time. Then we reversed our course and made for Guadalcanal again.

We came in sight of the island at dawn. I came up on deck, and it was with curious and mixed emotions that I trained my field glasses on that already historic shore. Yes, I could make out figures there. Were they friend or foe? It was difficult to determine at that distance. Would this mean the final chapter of my life—or the beginning of a new and glorious chapter?

We came nearer. Now I could make out hundreds and hundreds of men lining the shore. And then I recognized them: Americans. From the distance a Jap and American uniform appear the same. When you came close, you could see that the men wore trousers, not leggings. Therein lay the difference between Jap and American.

It was a beautiful day. Our strategy had worked so successfully that we could begin unloading immediately, for it was not necessary for us to land as combat fighting units. My unit remained aboard to unload, while other units went ashore and helped unload the Higgins boats as they came into the beach. We were under orders to work without halt until all ships were unloaded. The ships had to be out of the harbor by dark.

Our shirts open, many of the men naked to the waist, we descended into the hold and worked like stokers, unloading ammunition, food, weapons, and equipment. It was not altogether a matter of perspiration. While we toiled, a loud voice

boomed down to us. We looked at each other, startled. Then, a moment later, "Jap planes approaching Guadalcanal!"

Well, now, here you are, with enough ammunition underfoot to blow you and your ship to kingdom come. The ammunition must be unloaded. We had no place to take shelter. We worked on. Once the raid began, we'd take shelter, too—whatever shelter we could find in a hold jammed with explosives. If a bomb found its way down to us. . . .

Thinking any minute might be our last, we worked for forty-five minutes before the "clear" signal was given. No planes about. The attack had never materialized, we learned. Our fighters had turned the Japs back before they came into sight.

By 5 P.M. we completed our unloading, hopped into the Higgins boats, and made for shore. That was certainly a bustling place, too. Men were unloading material, men were consulting, men were digging fox holes. I'd no sooner set foot on the beach when I felt a blow on my back and a hearty voice:

"Well, goddamn, look who's here! If it isn't Conaway!"

I turned in delight. I knew that voice. It was Lieutenant Wendell Crain of Ada, Oklahoma, one of my old friends. He was wearing dirty khaki, he had at least two days' growth of beard on his face, and the sweat was running off him. But the grin was the old Crain himself.

"The Japs giving you much trouble?" I asked, after our first greetings were over.

"We're sure giving 'em hell," he said, "but we're damn glad to see you boys. You're the first reinforcements we've had."

That meeting was a pleasant interlude. There was too much work to do to shoot the breeze. A quick handclasp and I joined the men helping unload and haul the stores across the beach and into what turned out to be a coconut grove off the beach. This afforded some measure of shelter.

Now it was growing dark. We were tired and hungry. We feasted on cans of hard tack and cold vegetable stew. It tasted damn good to me, which proves how excellent a sauce hunger

can be. After we'd packed that away, we felt the full measure of our weariness. We were ready to drop asleep there, but we learned we had to march about four miles inland to a coconut plantation and bivouac there. It was a long trek. The men were too tired to grumble. I noticed idly that the foliage and vegetation was identical to that of the island upon which we'd trained. Coconut trees, grayish brown grass ranging from one foot to six feet high, with wide, sharp-edged blades, and nondescript underbrush. We certainly knew this sort of terrain, Lord knows!

When we reached the plantation, my first order from Captain M—— was:

"Place your men about five yards apart and have them dig fox holes for the night. Dig them at least two feet deep."

My men set to work digging, but their hearts weren't in the job. They were just too damn tired. They'd been working practically at top speed for the last fourteen hours, and they wanted sleep. Most of them dug shallow declivities in the sand, fell into them, and slept immediately. I looked over the area and was very pleased to see one hole already dug. It was the requisite depth. That was mine, I decided. I jumped into it and immediately fell asleep.

I was awakened by a bright light boring into my eyes. The entire area was lit up as though it were noontime. I sat up. I became aware of the grating sound of an airplane somewhere above me. It was dropping flares. It had the noisiest motor I'd ever heard. "That's Washboard Willie!" someone shouted, and "Washboard Willie" he's been known ever since. I was clearing the sleep out of my eyes, and then I felt rain. At first, I'll admit, I didn't quite know what it was all about. You don't emerge out of a deep sleep like that with all eight cylinders working. Then I jumped awake, at once. About a quarter mile away a stupendous explosion rent the air. I didn't know whether it was a bomb or a shell.

"It's a Jap cruiser!" the word flashed through the grove. "They're shelling us."

I stood up in my fox hole to see how the men were getting along. The boys who hadn't troubled to dig fox holes were up, now, and digging in earnest: the dirt really flew around there for a while. I vaulted out of my hole and went about waking up a few laggards who apparently would sleep through hell and high water.

Suddenly a shell hit about a hundred yards from us. A rain of shrapnel descended on us. I jumped back into my fox hole and hadn't no more than got into it when three men jumped on my neck.

"Hey!" I burst out. "What you getting in here for?"

"Aw, move over, all hell's broken loose, we're getting in here with you."

I didn't argue with them. Another shell landed near by. Fortunately, it was a dud. After that the shells fell farther and farther away. After a while no more landed. We could breathe easier.

My three new companions and I pulled our ponchos over our heads to keep as dry as possible, curled up as comfortably as we could, and fell asleep.

Thus I spent my first night on Guadalcanal.

At 2 A.M. the morning of October 26, I was taking it easy in a bomb-proof dugout underground. We were well established on the island. A runner woke me up.

"The Japs are attacking our lines on the Matanikau," he announced. "The Captain wants you to have your men ready to move by 5 A.M."

The Matanikau River was nine miles away. I hurried out and told my squad leaders the men must be awakened at 4:30 A.M. and be ready to leave at a moment's notice. As I made my rounds, I heard the dull pound of artillery. Things were looking up. We were to tangle with the Japs.

We began our march at daybreak. About four o'clock in the afternoon we reached a coconut grove a mile and one half behind our front lines. We received our orders. Our plane observers had

seen a column of about 300 Japs in an open area. They were apparently seeking to outflank our units so that they could hit them from the rear. Our battalion was to cover an open flank. We were to wait until dark, then move out on a grassy ridge and establish contact with Battalion Number——.

We sat back on our haunches and waited. During that period, we were given a splendid meal. Fresh white bread, baked on the island by our bakers, peaches, hot coffee, canned cream. We were beginning on our sandwiches when the rains fell, and they were soon soggy. Then the Japs began shelling us, and we were busy for a while. With darkness we moved out.

Battalion Number —— was about a mile away; and, while our orders were simple enough, carrying them through in that jungle darkness was not easy. Try as we would we were unable to establish contact with them. I ordered eight men out in an outpost, but this still left a gap of half a mile between us. Then we dug in for the night. We worked hard: the men dug many fox holes and I luxuriated in a particularly spacious one. Toward dawn one of the eight men staggered back to our lines. He was unhurt but utterly exhausted. His story was brief:

"The Japs got behind us, they were all around us, and we tried to fight our way out. It was dark and raining, and I couldn't see; I don't know where any of the other men are or what happened to them. I fired away, but I couldn't tell you whether I killed any Japs. I couldn't see what I was doing. I fired at their flashes and their noises."

With the first rays of daylight we investigated. We moved cautiously to where the outpost had been. There were signs of an awful fight. My men had done a good job. We found thirty-three dead Japs sprawled there, but no Marines, living or dead. Either the Japs had taken them prisoner—which wasn't likely—or they had escaped alive. Later we learned all seven were wounded that furious night but managed to make their way to the other battalion.

Now Captain M——'s orders came: take new positions and dig in again. The new positions, we found, were almost solid

coral, tough and difficult as anything to dig into. After all our labor digging into our old positions, this new order wasn't received with much good nature, I'll admit. But I started my men to work there and we dug in. In the meantime, Captain M—— returned to the rest of his company and moved his company headquarters to the place where my platoon had been dug in the night before. Then he took over the very same fox hole I had stayed in that night.

Near that fox hole Captain M—— was killed. That night.

I learned the story from a seventeen-year-old Marine runner who came dashing up to me sobbing and out of breath, the following morning. Jeeps, he said, had been coming up with canned food. Captain M—— got out of his fox hole and directed a group of his men who were unloading the food and distributing it. The Japs began shelling that area, and the first shell that fell there landed in the midst of this little group of men unloading food.

It was completely unexpected. They had thought themselves well hidden behind the ridge, out of observation by the Japs. That shell was a lucky hit. It killed seven or eight men on the spot: it wounded about fourteen men. My runner, telling me the story, could scarcely speak. He had seen it all. He had been standing near by. Somehow, he had escaped. He had been standing within ten feet of Captain M—— and the Captain was between him and where the shell landed. This fact may have had something to do with the fact that he was unhurt. The tragedy, the combination of events, everything added up so that it broke the boy all up.

By the time I reached the scene, jeeps and trucks were taking away the last of the bodies. Some of my best friends lay dead there. One of them was our gunnery sergeant; another was our first sergeant. As I stood there, thinking my own thoughts, Lieutenant Harris appeared. He looked pretty much down in the mouth. "The Colonel said I was to be in charge of the company," he said, and walked slowly away. Captain M——, I learned, was still alive. But he would die.

Seeing the bodies there, I thought fate had just stepped in and taken them all, suddenly, in a group, instead of one at a time. It was a shock. I felt awfully low. But I had to go back to my men and put up a good front. I had to act as though it were just one of those things. After all, if they'd see me broken up they'd be broken up, too. I think that day was the lowest day our company had on Guadalcanal. We liked Captain M——. We liked and respected him as a man. He was considered the finest company commander in the battalion. His loss was a real one.

He died two days later.

We were on this ridge for several days. With each day our morale rose and the men became more fighting mad. It was evident in every way. When I had to take patrols out front, every man volunteered. Then word came that we could move off the ridge. We were to be relieved by Battalion ——. We believed at first that we were to enjoy a rest, but we discovered ourselves marching to Henderson Field and then transported in trucks to the Tenaru River. Here we began a march down the beach in an easterly direction toward what was virtually no-man's land. No Marines had ever been there before.

We bivouacked with nightfall and received our orders in the morning. A Jap detachment was expected to land from a destroyer or destroyers sometime that night. Intelligence said so: we had better be prepared to meet them.

We marched about ten miles. This brought us to a point about twelve to thirteen miles east of Henderson Field. Here we took up a position on the beach just before dark on November 4.

We dug in at once. Our fox holes dotted the beach about ten yards back from the water. It began to rain about an hour after dark came. There was no moon. The sky was black and starless.

Our men were very tired. I determined to stay awake throughout the night, if I could possibly do so.

I made myself as comfortable as possible on the beach. I

crouched there in my fox hole with elbows on knees, facing the blackness of the water. Once I dozed off. I awoke with a start. Never had I seen water so completely black. Not even the faintest phosphorescent glow relieved the darkness far out to sea. Not the faintest line marked sea from sky.

Again I must have dozed off, perhaps for a minute. Each time my head began to droop, it took the strongest exertion of will to jerk it up again. The desire to sleep was overpowering. I remember thinking to myself, I'll look once more.

I looked.

I saw a light, clear and distinct, blinking out at sea. It was about a quarter mile offshore, I judged. I stared at it. Then I felt my temples tingle; I heard a low whistle, the faintest of whistles, unmistakably a boat's whistle.

The Japs had come. The Japs were preparing to land. Somewhere out in that darkness, the landing boats had slid silently down to the water. They were bearing down toward the beach.

I leaped to my feet. I raced from fox hole to fox hole, shaking my men hard. "Wake up!" I snapped. "The Japs are landing!" I had to shake them. They slept soundly, so accustomed to noise and shelling that only physical disturbance of their sleep would rouse them.

They were awake instantly. We clicked into position. We waited for the Japs to land.

Then a light suddenly showed itself down the beach, about half a mile to the right of our position. It vanished. It came on, then off. It was blinking.

Now the first light reappeared, in the same place as before. It began to blink.

The consummate nerve of the Japs! They were blinking back and forth to each other out there in the harbor, so near it seemed that I could have knocked those signal lights out by throwing rocks at them.

We stood there, straining our eyes. It seemed to us in the darkness we could make out the shapes of five destroyer transports. They moved down to the right, toward the light blinking

off shore. Then, faintly, voices came to us. The Japs, apparently undisturbed by the fact that we were there, were brazenly shouting orders. Then we heard still another sound in that strange night of sight and sound—the ripple and creak of the Jap boats plying back and forth between the ships, which now seemed no more than 200 yards out, and the beach.

The Japs were landing. They were landing on the beach to our right, no more than 300 to 400 yards from our right flank.

There was nothing for us to do, but wait. The Japs must make the first move. It was evident they far outnumbered us. After all, we were only an infantry battalion. We had no artillery. We dared not attack, for the destroyers most certainly, once we exposed ourselves completely, would have decimated us with their shells. At most we numbered about 600 men. They must have been landing from 1,000 to 1,500 men.

We waited. We made no sound. The men lay on their stomachs in their fox holes, two men together in each hole. We were prepared for hand-to-hand encounters, and in such instances the Marines fight on a team principle, two men to a team. And if they must, they can fight back to back against the enemy.

That was a long night. When dawn came, the ships had vanished. And with them, every evidence of human life. The Japs—1,000, 1,500 of them—had disappeared into the jungle, had been absorbed by the grass, the trees, the swamps.

I'll admit that didn't make us feel too good. Somewhere about us was a force of more than one thousand Japanese soldiers. They knew we were there. We were not sure where they were. Our salvation lay in the fact that they had no clear idea of our number.

As daylight became stronger, the Japs made their first move. It was typically Japanese. They paid ten lives to discover one of our positions. They sent out a ten-man patrol. It ran into a machine gun on our right flank. Our gunners were well camouflaged. They held their fire until the Japs were twenty-five

yards away, then opened up on them and wiped them out. In doing so, our gunners of course exposed their position. The Japs trained a .44-mm. gun on them and let go. Then they sent out a larger patrol. This ran into a second of our guns. Again, there was fearful loss of Jap life, and again the Japs, having thus located a second position, trained their guns on us. We retaliated as best we could, with our mortars, but it was obvious that it was an unequal struggle and that if we remained there, we would ultimately be cut down, even if the Japs had to lose ten men to our five to do it.

Our Colonel decided that since we were outnumbered it was the better part of wisdom to start back to the airfield. We dared not take the chance that the Japs would encircle us.

Carrying our wounded, we began the twelve- or thirteen-mile march back. We carried our wounded in ponchos. We moved slowly, fighting off Jap attacks time and again. By nightfall we had covered only six miles, but had gained a good position on the far side of a river. Here we camped for the night, after sending back a message to the General stating our position. At least the Japs would have to cross the river to attack us. The message came back from our General: stick tight, and a couple of battalions would soon arrive to help us.

These reinforcements came up posthaste and at last we could take the offensive. We proceeded to wait for daylight. When it came, we used the same tactics the Japs had attempted to use. Our battalion proceeded behind them, encircled them. The other two battalions attacked from the front and from the land side. Thus the Japs were surrounded, their back to the sea. They were pinned down and located in a definite area of jungle.

This done, our planes came over and strafed them; our artillery was brought up and shelled them. We settled down to a pitched battle.

In my own case, I and my men were opposed to Japs on the opposite side of a swamp about thirty yards wide. My platoon pressed the attack on them. Suddenly my platoon sergeant cursed. I ran to him. He'd been shot through the hip. He was

able to walk but only with great pain. I sent him to the rear. This left no one to assist me.

During a lull I gave my men their orders. We had to cross that swamp. We were on the offensive: we had to press our advantage home. Since platoon leaders are never expected to ask their men to do anything they would not do themselves, I got up and walked around as I explained our plans.

"Men," I said, "we're face to face with those Japs, and we've got to cross this swamp to get at them. I think we've got them outnumbered. Yet there may be a lot of them hid back there whom we can't see. You'll have to keep your eyes open as we go in."

I pointed out that it was a dangerous job to cross the swamp under fire. The swamp itself, I said, might be our enemy. We might be able to wade through it. We might have to swim. There was no way to determine how deep the water was in the middle.

I took a deep breath and was about to continue. At that moment, bang!—I got it through the shoulder. It was as though that bullet waited for me to stop talking.

I was knocked out for a moment or two. Those things travel more than 4,000 feet a second. I knew what had happened, but my chief emotion was one of downright surprise. I'd never really expected it could happen to me. I'd seen other fellows get it—but the thought that I would get it so casually and simply never crossed my mind.

My right hand felt paralyzed. It was numb. I felt nothing. My shirt was turning red. I knew I'd better get back to a doctor. I called the corporal in my first squad. "You've heard the orders, you'll have to carry them out alone," I said.

One of my men helped me to the rear. I could walk, but I was shaky. He placed his arm around my good shoulder and so we got back. A corps man brought a stretcher, and they carried me to the battalion physician. He cut my shirt off. The blood was pulsing out of the bullet hole like water out of a drinking fountain. I was on my back: I couldn't see; the blood

was over my face and in my eyes. The bullet had nicked the brachial artery, I was told later. Had it snipped the artery, I would have bled to death before help came. As it was, the physician used a pressure bandage, bound up the wound, gave me a shot of morphine, and there I lay, waiting.

"I'm going back home again, now," I thought to myself, calmly. "I'll be done with fighting for a while." I thought of this with absolutely no emotion. It was a fact and I was accepting it.

Then a couple of bullets whizzed over my head, so close I thought they'd skinned my nose. "Maybe I'm not going home at all," I thought. Again, there was no emotion connected with this. I might have been talking about someone else and not myself.

As it developed, I was hanging crepe prematurely. The other wounded and I were taken to an aid station, and then to the airfield, and we were flown out safely. My memento of Guadalcanal was a shattered shoulder blade, and a partly paralyzed right hand. The bullet had passed through a nerve.

Brilliant Navy surgeons spliced the nerve. I am gaining control of my hand again. I'm as good as new. Which is more than many a Jap can say.

I DIED ONCE

The Story of

CORP. WALTER J. BODT, U.S.M.C.



YOU'D HAVE your hands full trying to get Corporal Walter J. Bodt excited about anything. A graduate of Bushwick High School, Brooklyn, New York, he's twenty-three—slight, mild-spoken, and a one-time track star. He enlisted in the Marine Reserves in January 1939, and was called to service in November 1940. In his own matter-of-fact way, he tells here of the exploit for which he received the Navy Cross—and of his well-nigh miraculous return from death. Was he shaken when he learned that he had “died” for a moment? “Naw,” he says; “I got a kick out of it.”

You can say this for the Japs: they sure gave us a welcome when we landed on Guadalcanal. We hit the beach September 15, all full of guts and vinegar to give the Japs hell. But they let us have it first. We spent most of the first day unloading our stuff and carrying it into the shelter of a small Lever Bros. coconut grove, and after darkness came, we got it. It rained. A Jap cruiser shelled us. A dopey Jap aviator in a tub we called “Washing Machine Charley”—that motor sounded so old—stuck up in the sky over us, dropping blinding white flares to expose us. They gave us a real circus that night.

We really didn't have time to dig in, and we'd been so dog-tired after landing and unloading that we just slept where we fell, under the trees. Then, we hear this tub of an airplane. Then we see the light of his flares floating down, and making the whole goddamn grove bright as day. Then the cruiser starts

lobbing shells over at us. Hell, there wasn't much we could do. We hugged the ground. Overhead you could hear the swish and whistle of shells. Some of the boys were pretty shaky and you couldn't blame them. They were getting everything, including the kitchen sink—rain, and shells, and bullets, and noise, and that light. I kept busy going around warning the boys, "Keep your faces down—don't look up. They reflect the light—they'll give you away—duck down!"

Next morning first thing we know our battalion goes off on a two-day patrol. Whew! but that was a tough stretch! We had our first experience under rifle fire. We were walking across a bridge, which we called "Bayonne Bridge" because a lot of the fellows were from New Jersey and it made them feel good to call something after Bayonne—when we hear a sharp crack! Then another one.

We all hit the deck. We knew it was snipers. And when you hear the crack of those Jap rifles and the ping of one of those Jap .25's when it smacks against a tree, and you hit the deck so hard you just about knock yourself out, and you feel that one of those bullets just about parted your hair in the middle—well, then you know you're in the war.

Second day out we contacted an enemy patrol and had a little clambake with them. You know. You find a Jap, hit him; you don't find him, O.K., you try to smell them out more or less and fire at them. It was hot as an oven that day, and we used up our water plenty fast. That's when I appreciated what a drink of water could mean, if you didn't have it. Every man in the battalion was so thirsty that when we got back and near the Lunga River again, we just about fell into it. We were only out two days, as I say, but it was a bad stretch.

Then I find myself in a patrol going to Matanikau village. We're marching along merrily on our way when baby! everything lets loose around us as dusk comes. The Japs had ambushed us. They were all around us, in the trees, dug into fox holes, firing machine guns, snipers picking away at us, and mortars in the rear tossing shells into our midst. It was hell

and Colonel M——, our commanding officer, realized we'd be knocking our heads against a stone wall if we tried to stay there all night. There was a hill back to the left, and we knew if we could withdraw to it, we could reorganize our forces, set up defensive positions for the night, and be in a pretty decent position to start an offensive with daylight. But getting back to that hill, with the Japs opposing us, wasn't going to be easy. I might still be on the 'canal if Colonel M—— didn't pull a good Yankee trick. The firing's going on and we're raising hell and high water. The Colonel sends along the order: he wants B.A.R.'s, machine guns, mortars, and rifle genadiers up front. That's fine. But then he sings out so loud the Japs can hear, "Artillery! Come up fast!"

Well, now, you know, we didn't have an ounce of artillery. But the Japs didn't know that. When they heard that order, it caused so much commotion among them that by the time they got themselves organized we'd managed to get to the hill and safety. Once we were there, *we* reorganized, took care of our wounded, and radioed back to the beach for reinforcements.

Our defensive positions were well established that night. We sure had the Japs stymied. They didn't try a thing. Early the next day we're ready to make our own offensive and our reinforcements come up. It's another battalion. Some of the men fall out and start carrying back our casualties. The rest join us in our patrol. The Japs didn't lose any time in getting out from there, fast. We followed them clear down to Matanikau village the next day. They'd cleared out of the village, too, just before we got there. We found their food boxes, their ammunition still in boxes, and places where they'd pitched their fires. The grass was burned black and down to the ground.

Finally, we caught up with them at the Matanikau River. Part of my battalion got into Higgins boats, and we made our way along the beach to land in Jap territory. Two companies of the battalion and the First Raider Battalion attacked the Japs from the rear. We harassed them and managed to break up the attacking force they'd assembled. I was in the midst of

the mess. Sometimes you'd hit the deck and stick there, waiting; or you'd crawl along, see a Jap, pot him; you'd duck, you'd fire, you'd dash along. Yes, we were pretty busy all along there.

Then the order came for us to return. We got back all right to our little coconut grove. Then there was not much excitement for a few days, except for the usual 12:20 P.M. air raid. The Japs are very punctual, I will say that for them. At 12:20 you could stand by every day and be sure as anything that they'd come over. But they never hit much.

Then we prepared for what became known as the third battle of the Matanikau. Our mission was to go out, outflank the Japs, and hit them in the rear. My particular job was point squad. We were supposed to seek out any trouble, any snipers, and take care of them, so that the main body wouldn't be hit. Our general job at Matanikau was to get the Japs there and bottle them up, and the Japs we had to get were on top of a hill—and we had to take that hill. We went after them and they ran off like dogs with their tails between their legs when they saw us. But in running away, they cut into the column of our boys and cut us off from the main body. When we woke up to this, my squad was right on top of the hill. We could see the Japs all over the place. We had to have more support, or we'd be out of luck, on top of that hill all by ourselves. One of the fellows managed to go out around on the crest of the hill, and the Japs machine-gunned him. They did that one, two, three. We were in a pretty bad fix.

I was on my belly just below the crest of the hill, and I heard Lieutenant S—— say, "Those bastards are all over the place. We've got to get some mortar shells dropped on them."

But the mortar section of our company was behind us, on another hill, with the valley between us.

"God," Lieutenant S—— said, "I wish there was a signal man here."

I looked around at him. He was standing a few feet away from me when he said that.

So I spoke up. "I can semaphore," I said. "I used to be a boy scout once and I learned how."

He looked at me.

"O.K.," he said. "Go ahead!"

I pulled out my handkerchief and tied it to the tip of my bayonet. That would make one signal arm. Then I borrowed another handkerchief from the Lieutenant, stuck that on the tip of another bayonet, and had what I needed. They'd be able to see those two handkerchiefs across the valley.

I turned to the Lieutenant. "What'll I tell them?" I asked.

"Tell them Company — is on this hill and to fire their mortars a hundred yards to our front," he said.

Jap bullets were whizzing by all the time. I thought of those three fellows machine-gunned when they dared to show themselves above the crest of the hill. But this was something that had to be done, and I was it. That's the only way you can figure when you're a Marine.

So I stood up there and began sending the message. I began sending "— Company on..." and I was sending a letter C— I don't remember now where it comes in or what part of a word I was sending—when I was hit.

It was as though somebody hit me with a rock in my right eye. I yelled, "Right in the — eye!" clapped my hand over my right eye, and hit the deck. I looked down. Blood was all over my green dungarees. I crawled away from the spot that I was hit at because I didn't want them to dump a couple more on me, I didn't want them to hold field day on me, when Lieutenant S— spoke up.

"Where the hell you going, Bodt?"

"I'm getting off this spot," I said.

Lieutenant S— started bandaging me up, placing a battle dressing over my right eye, and it was then I realized my right arm was sort of numb.

"Give me your rifle, I'll put it to good use," Lieutenant S— said, and then he passed the word back for a corps man.

A fellow I knew passed me for a minute and stood and looked at me.

I yelled at him, "Get that corps man up here, will you?" I guess I was pretty damn impatient.

"Hold your water," this guy snaps. "I'll get him and a couple more along with him."

I lay there a few minutes, and then the corps men arrive. They place me in a poncho and carry me down to a point below the military crest of the hill, out of danger. Platoon Sergeant Pappy Traw was there. He was an old friend of mine. He looked me over.

"You'll be all right, Walter," he said.

Then he examined me a little more.

"Hell, kid, they got you in the arm, too," he began, and didn't say anything for a minute. Then, "D'you know, kid, one went right through your nose." He broke off, and then began shouting, "Where the hell's that corps man!"

Then Pappy talked to me. "You'll be back in the States having a beer while I'm still out here," he said.

He was right. Pappy's still out there. He's dead. They got him in November, I learned later.

The corps men came back. They put me in a stretcher. A lot of fellows were talking to me, it seems to me, on the way down. I was conscious, but somehow I don't remember what they said to me. I remember only that I had a lot of company as the corps men carried me.

Now, that bullet that got me. I was hit by just one. But it went to town on me. That bullet came from the left. It took off the eyelashes of my left eye, went through the bridge of my nose, ripped off the cornea of my right eye, and then ripped off the flesh, down to the bone, of my right forearm, which at that minute was up in the air, signaling.

If I'd been leaning forward an eighth of an inch, I'd be blind now. If I'd been leaning forward half an inch, I'd be dead. Would have caught me right through the temples.

I guess I was pretty sick. The doctors couldn't stop the bleed-

ing. From October 9, when I was hit, until November 3, I guess I was bleeding most of the time. They tried everything to check the hemorrhage. I must have hemorrhaged forty or fifty times in that period. I was given seventeen blood transfusions and plasma twice. Finally, they licked it.

But I sure had one time of it. I remember coming to, once, in a hospital. I'd been lying there, and all at once everything started going black. It was as though somebody had pulled a black shade down in front of your eyes, and you just didn't see anything any more. I came to, feeling dizzy. There was an apparatus there feeding blood into me, on my right, and hot bottles were placed all about me in bed. I'd never had that before. And my ribs hurt. Then I look up a little to the left, and there's a corps man staring at me bug-eyed. He was as white as a ghost.

"Jesus Christ," he says. "You died!"

I didn't get it at first. Then I learned that my heart had stopped. I'd stopped breathing, it seems, and they'd begun giving me artificial respiration until they could rush an oxygen tent to me. That was why my ribs hurt.

When I returned to the states I really learned how swell they treat you when you're wounded. I had marvelous Navy surgeons. A sailor who had to lose his eye, because he'd been hit by shrapnel, gave me his eye. The cornea was O.K. on it. Now I have two more operations to undergo. Then they'll tattoo the eye to make it look like my left eye. I can see a little through my right eye, though things are a bit hazy, but I know that's going to get better and I'll be as good as new.

There's one fellow I miss, when I come to think about it. He was the fellow in the hospital who always was fixing me up for a blood transfusion and saw to it that I got the blood I needed. We became good friends. Hell, I was always calling him "Dracula."

I'd sort of like to see him one of these days.

HENRY GOT A ZERO

The Story of

ACTING CORP. HENRY RAPATTONI, U.S.M.C.



A NATIVE OF *Philadelphia*, handsome *Corporal Henry Rapattoni* is *twenty-two*, and *modest as they come*. He's been in the *U. S. Marines* for four years. *Knocking a Japanese Zero fighter out of the air when it's doing 400 miles an hour—and achieving the job with a machine gun—is quite a feat*. *Corporal Rapattoni asks, almost plaintively, what all the excitement's about*. "*Plain dumb luck,*" he says.

Someday when somebody writes about the Japs, I hope they'll say something about what they can do with firecrackers. They're great believers in them; they use them as part of their war of nerves, and they sure can make you think the whole damn world's coming to an end. They toss them around at night and if you're not used to it you'd think the whole damn Jap army was throwing a million tons of lead at you at the same time.

On our third night on Guadalcanal they pulled it off on us while we were in a gully. They were on the hills on both sides of us and we were laying down in grass higher than a man's head. About ten o'clock that night they started to set off these firecrackers. Well, my heart nearly jumped right out of my throat! Before we could fire, the order flashed down the line, "Don't shoot!" We didn't dare betray our positions, which was what the Japs wanted us to do. Those firecrackers sounded so much like the real thing you found yourself waiting for that old familiar zing! of a bullet whizzing by. We lay there all

night. The next morning we crept through the grass a way and then we found out what the Nips were doing. The place looked like a street the day after July Fourth. They'd infiltrated into our lines and brought a lot of boxes full of firecrackers. The place was full of bits of charred colored paper. You'd think it was a celebration the way it looked.

That day we fought our way up the ridge overlooking the gully and that afternoon the artillery sent over a barrage of shells at the Japs, who then were lurking in the jungle just in front of us. Even though our shells were going over our heads, we were plenty scared. Hell, every time a shell exploded, a rotating band slipped off somewhere in its flight and if you're hit with one of those—well, they can knock your damn head off. But that didn't happen and our shells hurt only one bunch of guys—the Japs.

We're up there on the ridge, and about noon of October 5 someone yells, "Zeros coming in!"

Everybody ducks out of sight into fox holes—everybody but me. I'm manning a .50-caliber machine gun and I'm curious. I stick up there watching those Zeros—three of them, in single file—coming in at us. I don't know why I stuck out my damn fool head like that. Those Zeros were going in over us and on to Henderson airport. That seemed certain. I saw them clear as day. Three of them, one after another, with a big red Rising Sun on one side, and flying only about 200 yards off the ground.

Just as they're about to reach us, I say to myself:

"I'll get one of those guys."

They're going like a streak of light. I throw up the gun and jam the release hard. I sight the third Zero, the tail end guy. I can see him clearly. I can even see the pilot's head. I give him one steady burst.

Then I get the biggest thrill of my life. Streams of thick black smoke pour out of his motors. I'd got him right in the engine. The guys around me start jumping up and yelling and cheering. We watch that Zero slip lower and lower into the

jungle, the smoke shooting out behind him in a long black tail. He gives a sudden dip, and disappears.

"You got him, Johnny," one guy said.

I said, "Yeah, lucky break." Some other fellows came over and slapped me on the back, but then quite a discussion started among some of the other guys who said they'd brought him down. Hell, with a couple of guns blasting away and everything else, who could tell?

Next day we went out hunting for that Jap. We walked for nearly two miles from our ridge before we found what was left of the Zero. There was only a charred bit of metal, and the wings, squeezed together like an accordion, and alongside that, a little mound. I guess some Marines who got there first buried the pilot, or what was left of him. The boys did a lot of examining of the metal and the wings and found parts of the bullets so they could check with my gun and it was me, all right, who got him.

Three days later General DeValle, our commander, came up to us. He asked for me. I walked over. He smiled at me and shook hands.

"That was nice shooting," he said, and he nodded his head. "Nice work, nice work," he repeated. Then he nodded his head again and walked away. I sure felt good after that.

We were up on that ridge until the eighth of October. The morning of the eighth we moved up to the battle of the Tenaru. Our bunch was to guard a flank. We really were a listening post. As soon as we got to our position, we dug a deep trench and packed it around with sand bags, put up our piece, and waited. We didn't do much talking. The Nips were over the river and we had to keep on the alert.

A little before midnight a few stray tracer bullets came over. In the sky they looked like those sparklers the kids have on the Fourth of July. It looked as though a bunch of kids were throwing their sparklers over at us.

I was leaning against one of the sandbags, thinking of nothing at all, when I heard something hit the dirt near me—*inside the*

fox hole. I knew what it was. A hand grenade. I fell on my knees and fumbled around like crazy. A thousand things jumped through my mind. It seemed like there was a big clock in my head ticking off the seconds... one... two... three... My hand closed on it. It was like a lemon, all rough and hard, and it felt warm. It seemed like forever until I could pick it up and throw it away. It was just off my hand when it exploded. All I remember is a burst of flame, the heat, and a biting smell of burning powder in my nose.

Then I went out like a light.

When I came to, I was in a field hospital. I was minus most of three fingers on my right hand, and I had a slug of shrapnel in my ribs. A few days later I was flown out.

My family keeps on kidding me about that song, "Johnny Got a Zero." They're great ones for kidding a guy. But I just laugh it off.

ESCAPE FROM DEATH

The Story of

PVT. FRANK P. NICOLLI, U.S.M.C.



THIRTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD FRANK P. NICOLLI—"Nick" to his friends, among whom one of the closest was Corporal Barney Ross, the former lightweight champ and hero—is a one-time storeroom clerk from Newark, New Jersey. Married, he enlisted January 15, 1942. He left the U. S. for active service in August, and went on to Guadalcanal. He was hospitalized in the U. S. in February 1943, after the near-miraculous escape from death he so vividly describes here.

I was one of the replacements on Guadalcanal. The first Marines landed there on August 7—the history books will be full of that day. But we were the guys who came after. We were the relief. We came in sight of the island on Wednesday, November 4, 1942, and I hit the beach with the rest of the boys about 4 P.M. that afternoon. It was a beauty of a day—sun shining, blue sky, a sweetheart. It reminded me of the days we spent at Parris Island, South Carolina, where we trained back in the States. As we came bouncing in in our Higgins boats, I kept thinking, Well, there's Guadalcanal—I wonder how fast we can take it, keep it, and get going again. I'd read all about the place. As we came in, I saw a lot of Marines, with machine guns, on the beach. They were ready for any kind of Jap attack from the sea. As we hit the beach, they came out from behind their gun emplacements, shoved back their helmets, grinned, and gave us a royal welcome. They looked wonderful. Brown

as berries, tough as a barbed-wire fence. One guy grabbed my hand. He didn't know me from Adam.

"Hi, fella," he says. "It's swell seeing you."

"OK," I says. "You can go on home now. We're taking over from here on."

"Tough guy, ain't you," he says. "It's going to be pie for you tenderfeet. We did all the dirty work. You don't see no Japs around, do you?"

"Sure," I begin to say, grinning, when all of a sudden somebody starts shouting. I hear an auto horn toot three times—what was a Lizzy horn doing out here?—and somebody's voice booms out over a loudspeaker, "Condition red!"

Before you can turn around, the roar of Jap planes, and then we see them coming at us in the sky.

It was a Jap raid. Just a sort of how-de-do from the Nips.

"Get under, get under," runs through my mind, and I begin hunting for those famous fox holes. I see one about twenty yards away, toward the woods, and I make for it like a rabbit and flop in head first. The sand gets up my nose. I hear the Jap bombs go off somewhere to my left. I think, *Christ, if Mary saw me now . . . I think . . . so this is war.*

Well, nothing much happened the next couple of weeks. Routine stuff. Unpacking, cleaning, setting up details. Other guys might have had personal, hand-to-hand fights with the Japs, but not me. Somehow, I didn't get those breaks. Oh, while on patrol, I did get a couple of Jap snipers, shot them out of those high trees, but nothing to write home about. That is, until three o'clock of the afternoon of November 19. That's a day I'll remember. In five minutes, between three and four o'clock, I packed enough war to stick in my mind for the rest of my life.

I'll try to give it as it happened. I was part of a detail assigned to attack Point Cruz. This is a little thumblike piece of land jutting out into the ocean. But the Japs held it. They had it sewed up every which way, the place covered with guns,

mortars, artillery, everything you can think of. We started for it about 8 A.M. and inched up on it all morning. At noon we stopped to eat. We carried our can rations—beans, vegetable hash, hash and beans, and coffee. We had coffee powder and the coffee we made was cold, but it was coffee. We finished off with dessert—three pieces of green mint candy—and pushed on again.

Just before three o'clock we'd gotten so far that we were separated from our objective only by a road about fifteen feet wide. We began establishing our firing line there, and all at once the Japs open up on us. They were so close they could have thrown a cup at us. Machine guns, mortars, rifles—they laid down a regular wall of fire. We ducked. The bullets whizzed by, flipping past your ears like gunshot. We built up a fire line on our side of the road. Thank God, we had artillery support and behind us our trench mortars were giving the Japs hell. Then our machine gunner, one of the most marvelous men I've ever known—he was going back and forth along the line, encouraging us, cool as ice, his back to the Japs—ordered us to move back from the firing line twenty-five yards. We backed up slowly.

I'd just got my right knee behind me when we heard the whistle of a Jap mortar shell. It was coming at us. Then the sound stopped, just before it came overhead. "Hit the deck!" our gunner yelled, and we hit. We knew what that stopped whistle meant. You see, if the whistle continues, it means the shell is still under its own force going over your head and will land way behind you. But if the whistle stops, that means the shell is beginning to drop and you can pretty well figure that it's going to drop damn close to you. We all hit the ground. Joe W—— and George R——, about ten feet ahead of me, looked silly as they flopped down. I buried my nose in the sand. I remember how the sand tickled me, and how my thoughts seemed to go in circles, not making sense, not getting anywhere. It's hard to describe, but I was thinking hard, thinking with all my might, but no definite idea came into my mind.

Yet I can remember everything as though every second was stretched into a minute.

First, I heard a terrific explosion. Then I felt it. It sounded as though a brick building blew up about thirty feet to my left. And in the same second I felt as though two sledge hammers hit me simultaneously on either side of my head.

It was awful.

I had a nutty idea somebody had hit my brain pan with a big hammer and it was ringing and echoing as though it was made of iron. Another split second, and I was picked up into the air about four feet, whirled around like a matchstick, 45 degrees to the left, and then slammed down to the ground again. Just before I hit, I felt a sharp sting in the right part of my chest. Then I was slammed against the ground so hard it knocked the wind right out of me.

I picked myself up slowly. I felt as if I was gathering myself together, as though I'd been separated and had to pull myself together, tighten myself up, and then get up. I was dizzy. Blood was running down my uniform. Shrapnel had hit me in the chest.

Now, the order in which that nightmare happened—the sound of the explosion, the awful blows on my ears, the horrible feeling of being sucked up into the air, whirled about, stung in the chest, hurled down again—is clear in my mind. That's the way I got it—one, two, three, four, five, six. But I'm not clear about what happened in the next few minutes.

The fellows tell me they saw me stagger to my feet, turn toward the Jap lines, and begin stumbling forward.

A corps man grabbed me. I was tangled up in a bunch of vines on our side of the road, and I was bawling, and I was fighting them, and he cut me loose, turned me around, and led me back to our lines.

THEY'RE MY KNUCKLEHEADS —GOD BLESS 'EM!

The Story of

FIRST SGT. HARRY D'ORTONA, U.S.M.C.



HARRY D'ORTONA is a top-sergeant's top-sergeant—colorful, lovable, and profane. He's thirty-three, his home is Philadelphia, but he's been in the Marines for fifteen years. That's his life. The boys in the Marines are his boys, his "knuckleheads," and he loves them, unashamedly and proudly.

Maybe I'm screwy. You know, when you're in the Marines so long, it sort of gets you. But you know how sometimes something can happen that sends the shivers up and down your back? Well, that happens to me when I hear the Marines' song. Mister, that does something to me, and I'll tell it to you right now face to face. The guys in the Marines are the swellest kids I've ever had the honor to be a big brother to, and if I can spend the rest of my life doing the same thing, that's fine by me.

Let me tell you, just as an example. We left the States in April and I went with a See-Bee—that's a Construction Battalion—to establish an advance base to operate from before we go to Guadalcanal. Never mind where it was. I can't tell you and you can't print it, anyway. We do our work. And after our work is done, they take us out one morning and we're on our merry way. I don't know where, but we're on our way. I was mad as a dog because we worked like sons o' bitches there

for months with no water, no food, no women—well, now, it wasn't quite as bad as that. Take what I'm telling you with a grain of salt. A Marine always gripes. Anyway, it could have been better. You know how you feel, though. Just as we get things fixed up and I say to myself, Harry, relax, the sergeant comes up and says, "Prepare your embarkation roster."

"Jesus Christ!" I says, "What, again?" Hell, we'd only been there a month and it took almost a month to get there.

So we get the hell out of there and bounce around this way and that—what you don't know about where we were won't hurt you—and we hit the 'canal about September 15.

Now, I didn't know we were going to Guadalcanal. But the scuttlebutt was all around, and I guess most of us sort of thought we'd end up there. First thing I know, we're out at sea, on the way, and the skipper calls me into the office and says:

"Well, Harry, this is it."

"What you got now?" I ask.

"We're going to hit the beach," he says.

"Aw, you're kidding," I say, but he says, "No, look," and there he had a sketch of the operations we were to perform, when the zero hour was set for, and all the rest.

So that was it and I knew.

I call the company together in the hold and start right off.

"Well, kids, here it is," I say. "You get off your tails and listen because this is the McCoy. We're going to land in the morning. Pack up your stuff and get ready. You're going to get a hot meal and it's up to you whether it's going to be your last meal—or whether you're going to get more."

They sit there, taking it all in, cool as lettuce.

I give them a few tricks the Japs were supposed to be noted for.

The kids aren't bothered. They sit there and some of 'em are grinning as if they were saying under their breath, "Aw, cut out that baloney and let us get at those Japs." Maybe I

think I'm a tough first sergeant but those kids are as tough as any of us.

After I give 'em my little lecture, I say, "Now, any questions?"

They all laugh. Then I knew I had them in the right spirits and then I gave them the technical information they had to have—what each man was required to do, not for his own protection but for the protection of each and every individual that was left behind in America that made it possible for him to go out there to perform his duty—and a Marine never lets anyone down.

This was the day before we landed, remember, and we're still steaming toward Guadalcanal.

The morning of the landing I stopped down in the galley and looked the boys over.

"Eat hearty, my boys," I told them, "because this is the last fresh meat you'll get that is red."

Preparations were made that day for the landing. Now, I'm not kidding you, but in all my time in service the biggest thrill in my life was to know we were going over and that I was taking the kids with me. Because they were swell kids and I was proud of them.

The real thrill of my lifetime came when my Colonel—Colonel Hennecken—said, "D'Ortona, over the side."

All the boys were in the passageway on the upper deck leading out to the starboard promenade deck behind me. I turned my head and shouted over my shoulder to them, "O.K., boys, let's go."

I had about thirty-six boys with me, and over we went. Once we're in the boat, I counted each and every one. They were all there. I knew they were mine—that's the truth. That's just the way I felt, like a big brother.

We hit the beach. Then we began working like hell taking the equipment off the boats. You know, I never knew how much I was loved, as when we got on that beach. I was glad I wasn't a woman. They just threw their arms around you, those Marines

who'd been there since August 7, and practically kissed you. But we worked like hell.

I didn't know until later that only the Marines on the beach knew we'd landed or that they were getting replacements. Nobody signaled back because they didn't want the Japs in the interior to learn about it any sooner than they had to.

That night we were sent out into positions. Being sort of new and green to the thing, not knowing just what to do or when, we kind of thought everything was a cinch. We laid out there at night and we thought everything was pie, but the old Japs thought differently. They thought they'd break us in properly. They did, but not until around two o'clock in the morning. It was about ten o'clock at night that I was looking around in a coconut grove there when I suddenly hear a voice growl, "Who's there?"

"D'Ortona," I say, quick.

The voice says, "Who the hell are you, you son of a bitch, if you move I'll let you have it."

As soon as he answered back, I recognized who it was—Master Gunnery Sergeant Lou Diamond. Hell, I'd been with him down in Quantico, in China, Haiti and all over the world.

So I say, "Lou, you old son of a bitch, don't you know who I am?"

He peeks out from behind a tree then, and I see him, with a beard almost a foot long. He's quite a character.

"What the hell you doing down here?" he says.

"I'm here to get you people out of a rut," I tell him.

"Who you got with you?" he asks. He didn't even know reinforcements came.

So we come together and I start talking, but, you know, he smelled. He was in a fox hole, I discovered, and he'd been in there for maybe six or seven days and nights—and, well, he smelled. So I paid my salutations to him, congratulated him for his excellent performance of duty, because I knew he could put a mortar down on a dime and give you nine cents change if you asked it—and then I left.

As I say, this is about 10 P.M. the night of the day we landed.

Then I went around putting the flock to sleep in their fox holes in the coconut grove, and trying to put myself to sleep. But there was a bright moon out, and I couldn't get to sleep. Somehow, I dozed off, finally, and then, in my sleep, I heard a whine and a crash. *Jesus Christ*, I say to myself, *here it is*. I wake up. It's raining. A bright light almost blinds me up in the sky: I hear the whine of the flares and deafening crashes—a Jap cruiser out to sea is shelling us for all she's worth—and up in the sky there's an old Jap plane screwing around, dropping flares and lighting up the whole place like we were in some goddamn movie or something. We called the Jap "Washing Machine Charley," later, because his tub sounded like a washing machine.

I run over to the kids, wake 'em up, warn 'em, "Hey, stay right in those holes, you're all right there, stay in."

I go back to my own hole and look for Barney, my sergeant major. I see him, sleeping away about ten feet from me—and he's not in any fox hole. He's sleeping right out there in the open.

"Barney," I yell, "get in the hole!"

"The hell with those yellow sons of bitches," he says, lazy-like. "My number's not up yet." And he wouldn't get into a hole, either. Right through that rain, and that shelling, and the flares, all the night, he slept through it like he was back home.

I watched him. How does he do it, I wondered, I wish I could get like him. Then I realized that the only way he got that way was through his experience, being in the last war, in Nicaragua, China, and all the rest. I thought, Well, Harry, here's your chance to get experience, too.

So I went to sleep.

Nothing happened.

The next morning we got up and established defensive positions on the line.

From then on, for the next I don't know how many days, I

can't say things were popping all the time. We had excitement, you know, patrols and so on. But I remember best that when we had air fights Barney, who was a nut on that, would wake me up and pull me out of the fox hole to watch them. We used to bet. Buck says the Japs get nothing, we get six. Or we get five. Like that. Hell, we played the numbers game with the Jap ships.

A typical day would go something like this—when we weren't on offensive action, remember. We'd get up at 6:30 A.M. Get our early coffee, good and hot. But no food. You'd want more, but you didn't get it until eight o'clock, when breakfast came. You'd tidy up your place a bit. Of course, there isn't much you can do to a fox hole. You clean it up as much as you can. If you can get some water, you wash your face. You don't even think about shaving. And if you can't get any water, you don't wash, either.

Eight o'clock—breakfast. You line up in groups at the field kitchen. You get a pan, a cup, and something to eat. You're fed all right. You eat standing up, or you join a buddy in a group. You talk, but only in whispers. Nobody's making any more noise than they have to.

Nine o'clock—you carry on. Train in technical problems. You keep your equipment in tip-top shape for immediate use.

Ten o'clock. You go over and try to chisel the galley out of another cup of coffee. The galley cook looks at you, grins, but doesn't dish out any Java. You go back to your fox hole. Harry, you say, you're slipping. I remember when a first sergeant could get anything he wanted.

Eleven o'clock. You go out and try to find something to do. The men are resting, dozing, writing letters, playing games, gambling, talking to the chaplain, who's making his rounds.

Noon. You're in the tropics, so, what the hell, you take a siesta, too. But it's not for long because you know at 12:20 the Japs will come over. The Japs being punctual, they never miss coming over on time, but they miss everything else, if you get what I mean.

Twelve-twenty. Jap air raid. You go into your hole again. Those air raids never bothered us much. Only thing bothered me was when Barney and I'd bet and the bastard would clip me for about ten bucks. We didn't have any dough on us, but being Marines we're honest, and the understanding was I'd pay him if I ever ran into him. I haven't run into him yet.

One P.M. You stick in your fox hole again.

Two to three P.M. You get a little water to clean up, or you try to chisel permission to go down to the river to bathe.

Four o'clock. Now it's chow time again. You eat supper, come back, make preparations for the night. You eat a little rice, and every third day, a slice of bread.

That's the way it went. Peaceful-like, until October 7, when the action began in which little Harry got it. You see, the Japs got to be a nuisance over the Matanikau River, and preparations were made to clean them out once and for all.

Colonel Hennecken called the officers together and gave them instructions, then called all us senior noncommissioned officers over and told us what was required of us. This was our chance for big-time stuff, he said, and he expected a good showing.

We started marching toward our objective, about five miles away, and when night came, we bivouacked in the area. I put out a couple of outposts. The boys looked pretty peaceful to me. They didn't need any encouragement. Several times during the night I walked around to see what was going on. I wished they were my babies because I'd never have any trouble from them, they slept so sound. We had a hasty lunch the next morning out of our emergency rations, and we had a good laugh over what happened when it was still dark.

Somebody saw the Colonel coming with a light. A kid snaps out, "Put the goddamn light out!"

There's no answer. But the light goes out.

With daylight we made preparations to move forward into the attack. Every man knew just what his job was and what

was to be expected of him. I had confidence in them. All were ready and willing.

Some of the old boys were a little fidgety and kind of anxious, but all they wanted was to be sure they'd get souvenirs of the Japs. Every one of them wanted to get himself a Jap because he knew nobody was going to give him one.

We went out. It was tough going. We had to cut our way, climb steep hills, sometimes crawl up on them, but there was never a murmur, never a complaint, just the grim determination to go on and get 'em the hell out of there so we could go back and rest up.

We crossed the Matanikau about four o'clock the morning of the eighth. We were watching the action going on all the time. We had a certain way to get on a flank to cut the Japs off, but we couldn't go until another unit ahead of us got to its objective. We were watching the forward OP directing the artillery, seeing the planes doing their jobs, the mortar shells landing where they should—all with remarkable accuracy. We knew it was a cinch in just a matter of time. Then the minute came for us to move forward.

My Captain comes up and says, "D'Ortano—" calm as if he was talking to me in my office—"get them together. We're moving forward."

I got my sergeants. I told them:

"Skipper said we're moving forward. You know what I mean."

"O.K., Top," they said, and we moved forward.

The terrain was tough going. All hills. It was raining like hell. We were wet to the skin. There wasn't any drinking water. It was so hot that we'd used up all we had in our canteens and just didn't have any more. So we cross the Matanikau River, wading through it chest high. It was up to my armpits, because I'm not the tallest guy you ever saw. Our forward company made contact, and it was fighting like hell. We crossed the river, crossed a little stream beyond the river, and were just waiting the word to push on through.

Then I hear the report of a sharp pop! That's the sound a .25-caliber makes—and that's the rifle the Japs use. I look around for a sniper and then look down on the deck—you know, the ground—and lo and behold, there was a smoking grenade at my feet.

I said, *Harry, this is it.*

I didn't mind. I looked at the kids all around me, standing up, waiting to go forward, and I saw the smoking grenade. Something had to be done. I knew they go off from five to seven seconds from the time they're thrown, and I didn't know how long it was down there. I knew it would go off within the next one or two seconds. I used to tell the kids all the time, if you see a grenade land near you, always pick it up and throw it because you can throw it faster than you can run. You don't have much chance either way, but—well, all this goes through my mind swifter than I can tell you.

I bent down and picked it up and I says, Harry, this is it, and I started thinking, why didn't I do this and why didn't I do that with my life, back home, and it was smoking down there as I picked it up and I heaved it with my right hand. I threw it away from the boys at a 45-degree angle, so nobody'd get it.

It went off.

I thought I got hit on the head with a pile driver. It knocked me off my feet, and I began rolling down the hill. When I stopped rolling, I saw two dead Japs right in front of me. I was lying on my back. I saw those Japs and I says, "Oh God, not with them! Not with them, please." I didn't mind dying, but I didn't want to lay with those sons of bitches.

My right hand felt numb. I grabbed the wrist with my left hand and looked at it. The words came out of me without me seeming to say them. "My God, they're gone!" My first and second fingers were gone, and my hand was just a bloody mess.

It burned more awful than anything I ever knew up to then. There was a puddle of dirty water next to me. It was dirty and muddy, and I knew I shouldn't do what I did, but I stuck

my hand in there trying to cool it off. It felt a little better in there. My legs were burning something terrible.

I looked up and a corps man's standing in front of me.

"Take it easy, Harry," he says. "I'll fix you up in a minute."

I relaxed because I knew I was going to be in excellent hands. Then, as he was fixing up my hand, I noticed blood oozing out of both my shoes, and my shoes were all torn up. I thought, *My God, them too?*

They took off my shoes and fixed up my feet. Shrapnel had gone through my left heel, through my right leg, and a piece of shrapnel hit over my right toe and fractured it.

A couple of more corps men came over and applied tourniquets, and then the men formed a human chain and they hoisted me up the hill, then to a waiting stretcher, and then to Battalion CP. They put sulfa powder over my hand and my feet, gave me a shot of antitetanus serum and then a hypo.

I laid there all that night. The Japs opened up with machine guns and used purple tracers, trying to determine our position. I laid there for forty-eight hours and wasn't evacuated until the tenth. You see, I had to advance with the troops. The only way we could get out of there was to win that battle—or else they'd carry us all out feet first, if at all.

We won that battle. My boys won it.

They were my knuckleheads—God bless 'em!

salient fact, the heart-stopping human detail, are twenty-one personal accounts from these men — stories told by the men themselves. They are the stories of men who have lived in hell and lived to tell of it. Here is Sgt. Albert Schmid who was awarded the Navy Cross for his single-handed destruction of a flanking attack, during which he accounted for 200 Japs on Guadalcanal. Here is Private Nicolli who was literally blown into the air like a matchstick and then, with a piece of shrapnel in his chest, helped a wounded comrade to the rear. Here is the story of a Marine gunner in a Navy dive-bomber, and the story of “the luckiest Marine in the Solomons” whose tonsils were neatly eliminated by a Jap sniper, and many others.

If you want to know how our boys are taking this war, if you want the complete stories behind the headlines from the Pacific, this should be your book. Your blood will run faster as you, yourself, spend memorable days and nights “out in the boondocks.”

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